

# ATTACHMENT A - PUBLIC RECORD REQUEST RESPONSE FORM

Office of the Governor  
State Capitol, 600 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.  
Nashville, TN 37243

DATE: May 7, 2019

REQUESTOR'S NAME & CONTACT INFORMATION: Kent Hoover  
71946-97675093@requests.muckrock.com

In response to your records request received on April 21, 2019, our office is taking the action(s) indicated below:

☐ The public record(s) responsive to your request will be made available for inspection:

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Date & Time: \_\_\_\_\_

☒ Copies of public record(s) responsive to your request are:

☒ Attached;

☐ Available for pickup at the following location:

\_\_\_\_\_; or

☐ Being delivered via: ☐ USPS First-Class Mail ☐ Electronically ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

☒ Your request is denied on the following grounds:

☐ Your request was not sufficiently detailed to enable identification of the specific requested record(s). You need to provide additional information to identify the requested record(s).

☐ No such record(s) exists or this office does not maintain record(s) responsive to your request.

☐ No proof of Tennessee citizenship was presented with your request. Your request will be reconsidered upon presentation of adequate proof of Tennessee citizenship.

☐ You are not a Tennessee citizen.

☒ The following state, federal, or other applicable law or exemption prohibits disclosure of the requested records:

Certain records responsive to your request are protected from disclosure pursuant to the deliberative process privilege.

☐ Failure to pay.

☐ It is not practicable for the records you requested to be made promptly available for inspection and/or copying because:

☐ It has not yet been determined that records responsive to your request exist; or

☐ The office is still in the process of retrieving, reviewing, and/or redacting the requested records.

The time reasonably necessary to produce the record(s) or information and/or to make a determination of a proper response to your request is: \_\_\_\_\_

[ ] The estimated total cost of your request is at least \$100.

Type of Charge	Estimated Cost
Copies: _____ pages at _____ per page	\$ _____
Labor: _____ hours* at _____ per hour	\$ _____
Other: _____	\$ _____
<b>TOTAL ESTIMATED COST</b>	\$ _____

\*The number of hours has been reduced by one to account for the first hour of labor performed by the highest paid employee that contributes to processing the request, for which there is no charge.

[ ] A deposit of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ is required before this Office will begin processing your request. Acceptable payment forms include \_\_\_\_\_. Please remit payment to the following address by \_\_\_\_\_.

Office of the Governor  
Attn: Executive Assistant, Legal Office  
State Capitol, 600 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.  
Nashville, TN 37243

Failure to timely pay will result in the denial of your request.

If you have questions regarding your request, please contact the Public Record Request Coordinator.

Sincerely,

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Public Record Request Coordinator

## Erin Merrick

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**From:** Erin Merrick  
**Sent:** Monday, April 22, 2019 3:30 PM  
**To:** AE-Governors\_Staff  
**Subject:** Action needed: public records request

Governor's Staff,

The Governor's Office has received a public records request for the following records:

- **"Any emails from or to Tennessee government officials containing any of the following key words: UAW, United Auto Workers"**

Please ascertain whether you have records responsive to this request. If you do have records responsive to this request, please provide those records to me by COB on Wednesday, April 24. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you.



**Tennessee  
State Government**

Office of the  
Governor

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**Erin Merrick**

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**From:** News Clips  
**Sent:** Saturday, April 20, 2019 12:14 PM  
**To:** AE-Governors\_Staff  
**Subject:** The Tennessee Journal - April 19, 2019  
**Attachments:** 19tnj16.pdf

See attached PDF.

# The Tennessee Journal

The weekly insiders newsletter on Tennessee government, politics, and business

Vol. 45, No. 16  
April 19, 2019

## House sweetens the pot to get rural support for urban vouchers

Gov. Bill Lee's expanded voucher program cleared its last major hurdle in the House, and leadership is expressing confidence the last-minute changes will capture enough support among wary Republicans to pass the measure in a floor vote next week.

As approved by the House Finance Committee, the Education Savings Account (or ESA) program would set into stone that only students in the state's four largest counties would be eligible to participate — previous versions kept open the possibility of more districts joining if three schools fall among the bottom 10% in the state.

The House bill would also get rid of a provision to reimburse districts for 100% of the school funding dollars lost by having students take up the vouchers. Instead, that rate would be set at 75% in the first year, 50% in the next, and 25% in year three before dropping to zero. Meanwhile, the balance would be distributed among other counties with at least one priority school.

To supporters, the amendments show a creative approach to addressing the concerns of rural lawmakers who don't want vouchers to spread to their home districts while also giving them access to a large new pool of recurring government funding (a total of up to \$125 million over five years under Lee's original plan).

To critics, the changes amount to little more than a payoff for rural lawmakers and a promise to keep unwanted ESAs from washing up on their shores. They also question why the oft-repeated adage that you can't fix failing schools by throwing money at them only seems to apply to urban districts and not rural ones.

**Halting lawsuits.** Disputes about adequate school funding have long been a subject of litigation in Tennessee, and the removal of Lee's original "hold-harmless" promise is bound to make attorneys for Davidson, Shelby, Knox, and Hamilton county school districts restless. But buried within the bill is language to ban school districts from challenging the measure in court — a provision bound to inspire its own legal challenges.

**Partisan play.** The changes to the ESA bill reflect a growing willingness to exploit a divide between heavily Republican rural areas and increasingly Democrat

urban ones. The talking points distributed to Republican House members call the bill a "conservative solution to correct years of liberal mismanagement" of education policy in the state's largest cities. The aim of the legislation, according to the memo, is to ensure the "poorest children in those deep blue metropolitan areas have a fighting chance at a quality education."

**More changes to come?** Rep. Jason Zachary (R-Knoxville) said he supports the concept of school choice and voted for the House bill in committee. But he raised concerns about the potential financial strain on his home district and expressed hope that the pilot program could be dialed back to apply to only two counties — presumably Shelby and Davidson — before a floor vote.

**Onward to the Senate.** The companion bill didn't get taken up in the Senate Finance Committee this week, giving proponents more time to work on whipping votes among members of the panel.

Senate Speaker Randy McNally (R-Oak Ridge) told reporters on Thursday that the chamber is working on an amendment that could strip Knox and Hamilton counties out of the bill. That's a move that might placate Republican holdouts on the committee, including Chairman Bo Watson and Todd Gardenhire, both from Chattanooga, and Richard Briggs of Knoxville.

Gardenhire, who has sponsored past bills to provide in-state college tuition to students brought to the country illegally as children, also opposes a provision in the ESA legislation requiring immigration status to be verified in order to qualify for the program.

Among other committee members, Sen. Joey Hensley (R-Hohenwald) voted against the bill at a previous stop in the Education Committee because it wasn't limited to children attending failing schools, and Senate Republican Caucus Chairman Ken Yager of Kingston has declined to publicly divulge his position on the bill.

It takes six votes to clear the 11-member Finance Committee, so those five Republicans plus the panel's two Democrats could put the measure on shaky ground. It remains to be seen whether the changes advanced in the House will be adopted in the Senate, or if major dif-

ferences might be left to be hammered out in a conference committee after floor votes.

**Charter authorizer.** After some initial hiccups, the governor's bill to create an independent body to authorize charter schools was passed by both chambers this week. That work has previously been done by the state Board of Education, which charter advocates saw as too deferential to local school districts' wishes.

The administration had to back off of its initial plan to allow applications to be made directly to the new panel and instead retained the current practice of having it serve as an appellate board for operators denied at the local school district level. But the new law will allow those appeals statewide, and no longer just in school districts that have at least one priority school. The bill passed 61-37 in the House and 27-3 in the Senate.

#### No opinion for you

### **AG will no longer weigh in on bills that could face legal challenges**

Attorney General Herbert Slatery has refused a request from Rep. G.A. Hardaway (D-Memphis) to opine on whether the school voucher bill conforms with a U.S. Supreme Court ruling requiring states to educate all K-12 students regardless of their immigration status.

Solicitor General Andree Blumstein said in a letter to Hardaway that if the ESA bill becomes law, "it would almost certainly be the subject of litigation." The office's "longstanding policy," she wrote, is not to weigh in on matters that could involve potential court action.

That policy might come as a surprise to longtime observers of interactions between state lawmakers and attorneys general over the years. Many opinion requests put to the office, after all, have to do with sorting out constitutional questions about legislative proposals — most of which at least carry a decent likelihood of legal challenges should they go into effect.

While Slatery has severely reduced the number of opinions his office has issued compared with his predecessors, he hasn't halted them entirely. For example, he's raised constitutional concerns over an earlier incarnation of a bill to ban abortions once a fetal heartbeat is detected, a measure declaring the Bible to be the state's official book, and a proposal to create "In God We Trust" license plates. So it's unclear which bills are deemed worthy of legal opinions and which aren't.

The problem for Slatery is that if he raises constitutional concerns about a bill, he would be conflicted from representing the state in the not-unlikely event lawmakers ignore him and enact the measure anyway. And with already tepid support among the Republican majority in the General Assembly, Slatery may have decided that working behind the scenes is a better approach than issuing potentially explosive opinions.

On the other hand, by abdicating his traditional role of publicly identifying constitutional concerns about pending legislation, the attorney general is giving lawmakers plausible deniability about the likelihood of expensive — and potentially successful — lawsuits.

#### Per diems and PACs

### **Lawmakers look to spend more on hotels, hike Senate fundraising limits**

It looks like the latest agreement between the two chambers of the Tennessee General Assembly could result in resolving two items on their respective wish lists: A longtime push by the House to increase the amount of money lawmakers can receive for hotel stays in Nashville and the Senate's desire to double the amount of PAC contributions they can collect.

The amendment was made in the Senate State and Local Government Committee this week to a caption bill sponsored by House Speaker Glen Casada (R-Franklin) and Senate Speaker Randy McNally (R-Oak Ridge).

Lawmakers currently receive the federal rate for hotel stays in Nashville, which is \$179 this year. Under the proposed change, they could instead get the annual average cost of a nightly downtown hotel stay, which is \$219. Lawmakers could draw from their campaign accounts to pay for any lodging costs above that rate or for travel not covered by legislative per diem rules.

The speakers could also waive a law barring hotel reimbursement for lawmakers living within 50 miles of the state Capitol for members "unable to return home" from business in Nashville. The added lodging costs are estimated to increase the General Assembly's annual accommodation costs by \$323,500.

The Senate has long pushed to increase its campaign finance limits because members of the upper chamber serve twice as long as House members and have triple the number of constituents. The chamber voted 29-3 on Thursday on a bill to double all Senate contribution limits, but that measure has been put on hold in the House.

The separate bill incorporating the hotel reimbursement hike would double PAC maximums for senators, but not individual contributions.

#### From the campaign trail

### **Special election season drawing to a close for state Senate — or is it?**

Voters head to the polls on Tuesday to decide who will fill the unexpired state Senate term of Mark Green (R-Ashland City) following his election to Congress.

It's the fourth recent special election to fill vacated GOP seats in the Senate following the resignations of Mae Beavers to focus on her unsuccessful run for governor, Jim Tracy to take a position with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Mark Norris following his confirmation to a federal judgeship. Republicans have held on to each of the vacated seats so far.

A fifth opening created by former Sen. Doug Overbey's appointment as U.S. attorney for the eastern district didn't require a vote because it came less than a year before the 2018 general election.

Senate GOP leaders express confidence in Clarksville City Councilman Bill Powers' prospects against Democrat Juanita Charles in the pending contest for the District 22 seat.

# Tennessee News Digest

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- President Donald Trump's administration has approved a disaster declaration for 56 Tennessee counties affected by severe weather between Feb. 19 and March 30. Gov. Bill Lee has estimated the flooding and storms caused more than \$151 million in damage.
- Swedish furniture retailer Ikea is forfeiting up to two years of the 11-year property tax abatement it received in return for building a store in Memphis

after creating only 147 of 175 jobs promised for the \$64 million store in 2015.

- The state's first measles case of the year was confirmed in East Tennessee. The Health Department says the state has had 15 cases over the last decade.

● Nashville police arrested a man who allegedly attacked a state employee arriving for work at the Capitol early Thursday. The woman suffered a broken nose and bruises as a result of the attack,

which was caught on surveillance video. Both the House and Senate held prayers for the victim during floor sessions.

- South Carolina lawmakers voted to confirm Gov. Henry McMaster's appointment of Michael Leach to head the state's child welfare agency. Leach had previously spent 10 years with the Tennessee Department of Children's Services, including as deputy commissioner for child programs.

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Powers, a managing partner of an auto dealership, emerged as the Republican nominee after a tough four-way primary in March. He has raised more than \$102,000 from donors, loaned his campaign \$120,000, and spent \$195,000. Charles, a real estate agent and Army veteran, was unopposed for the Democratic nomination. She raised nearly \$35,000 and spent \$9,700 through the pre-general reporting period.

The seat switched to Republican control when Green defeated incumbent Sen. Tim Barnes by 6 percentage points in 2012. Green won re-election by 34 points in 2016. The district includes Montgomery County (which accounted for 87% of the ballots cast in the 2016 Senate race), plus Houston and Stewart counties.

Republicans were optimistic about their chances of flipping an open state House seat in Clarksville last year, but Democrat Jason Hodges defeated Tommy Vallejos by 8 points. Incumbent Rep. Joe Pitts had given up the seat to make a successful bid for Clarksville mayor.

Powers has gained endorsements from Green and Gov. Bill Lee, while Democrats have tried to make an issue out of a discussion last month on the Republican's campaign Facebook page in which the candidate appeared to agree with a commenter who made statements against the LGBT and Muslim communities. Powers told *The Leaf Chronicle* he "did not post that."

Turnout has been light in early voting, with about 5,000 ballots cast through Wednesday.

**Briggs to beg off?** The Capitol crowd heaved a sigh of relief when Knoxville surgeon Richard Briggs soundly defeated firebrand incumbent Sen. Stacey Campfield in the Republican primary in 2014. Not only did that result rid the chamber of Campfield's antics, but Briggs' election also made it more difficult for resurgent Knoxville Democrats to make a serious run at the seat.

Briggs, a prominent supporter of then-Gov. Bill Haslam's failed efforts to expand Medicaid and retain national testing standards for public school students, was re-elected by 11 percentage points last year in an election that saw the defeat of incumbent state Rep. Eddie Smith and the narrow survival of fellow Knoxville Republican Rep. Martin Daniel.

Democrats' efforts to challenge Briggs kept them from pouring more resources into what might have been a winnable race for Democrat Gabby Salinas against Republican Sen. Brian Kelsey of Germantown.

But Briggs appears to be growing increasingly frustrated with legislative machinations and has spoken about leaving the General Assembly to pursue other interests. The decorated Army veteran and French speaker told *The Tennessee Journal* he's interested in taking on a medical role for the State Department at a U.S. embassy in Africa. He said he previously worked with the agency while deployed to China and Iraq.

Briggs said his thoughts about moving on predated a flareup last week over the defeat of his bill seeking to establish rules for responding to contamination in raw milk supplied through Tennessee's "cow sharing" program. The Senate Commerce Committee considered an amendment to essentially gut the measure and heard tearful testimony from an opponent of the bill before putting the legislation off for at least another year.

Briggs was incensed by his treatment at the hands of the bill's opponents. Senate leadership had to step in to soothe Briggs' hurt feelings. The incident didn't end up pushing the senator over the edge, but it has forced Republicans to ponder the possibility of a tough fight on their hands to replace him if he does hang 'em up.

**Mayor's races.** The state's three biggest cities are holding mayoral elections this year. David Briley in Nashville and Jim Strickland in Memphis are running for re-election, while Knoxville has an open race because Madeline Rogero is term-limited.

Nashville Metro Councilman John Cooper, the brother of Democratic U.S. Rep. Jim Cooper, announced this week that he had changed his mind about an earlier decision to sit out the mayoral contest. He joins the race against incumbent Briley, Democratic state Rep. John Ray Clemmons, and former Vanderbilt professor Carol Swain.

In Knoxville, former Vice Mayor Joe Bailey, a Republican, decided against joining the race to succeed Rogero. The candidates so far include former school board member and Rogero aide Indya Kincannon, businessman Eddie Mannis, social media specialist Fletcher Burkhardt, and attorney Marshall Stair.

Strickland raised more than \$68,000 in the first quarter in his bid for a second term as Memphis mayor. Former Mayor Willie Herenton and Shelby County Commissioner Tami Sawyer each raised about \$26,000 for their challenges, while businessman Lemichael Wilson brought in nearly \$35,000.

## Tennessee Notes & Quotes

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■ Former Gov. **Bill Haslam** is headlining a fundraiser for U.S. Sen. **Ben Sasse** (R-Nebraska) in Nashville on Wednesday. The event comes as Haslam nears a decision about whether to run for the seat being vacated by Sen. **Lamar Alexander** (R-Maryville) next year. The fundraiser is co-hosted by several prominent Republican donors, including **Pete DeLay**, the former owner of Sherman-Dixie Concrete Industries.

■ Gov. **Bill Lee** signed one of his first legislative initiatives into law on Monday to get rid of a 9.5% amusement tax on dues for smaller gyms, bringing them into line with an exemption for larger fitness centers. The cut is projected to reduce revenues by about \$6.4 million for the state and \$2.6 million for local governments.

■ “Any time a business has a lower tax, then they’re able to invest in their companies to provide better services, lower costs, or any number of ways that makes their business stronger, creates more jobs, and improves the economy of the state.” — **Lee** when asked by reporters whether gym goers should expect an automatic decrease in their dues.

■ Williamson County Schools Superintendent **Mike Looney** is the lone finalist to become the head of Fulton County Schools in Atlanta. Metro Nashville Public Schools had offered to make Looney its superintendent in 2015, but he ultimately turned down the job.

■ “We don’t need union bosses in Detroit telling Tennessee what’s best for our workers.” — **U.S. Sen. Marsha Blackburn** (R-Brentwood) about renewed efforts by the United Auto Workers to seek a union vote at the Volkswagen plant in Chattanooga.

■ The UAW responded that Volkswagen workers in Chattanooga only want the same union rights as **Blackburn’s** constituents at the GM plant in Spring Hill.

■ Former U.S. Sen. **Bob Corker** (R-Chattanooga), who played a prominent role in opposing the union’s efforts before the UAW lost a union election at the Volkswagen plant in 2014, told the *Chattanooga Times Free Press* he doesn’t plan to get involved this time.

■ “It was very important at that time that I was. The workers out there will decide the future.” — **Corker**.

■ The ACLU of Tennessee has hired **Brandon Tucker** as policy director. The Fisk graduate previously worked for the organization’s national office.

■ Nashville Public Radio named **Steve Swenson**, a manager of CBS Radio in Washington, as its president.

■ Auto dealer and Republican donor **Lee Beaman** settled the divorce case from his fourth wife, **Kelley**, for \$7.5 million in cash and \$10,000 per month in child support, *Scoop: Nashville* reported.

■ The state House and Senate agreed to changes to a bill seeking to set statewide guidelines for community oversight committees for police department activities. The initial House plan was to get rid of subpoena powers entirely following a charter amendment approved by Nashville voters creating an oversight panel that the

chamber’s Republican leaders saw as hostile to law enforcement. But under a compromise with the Senate, the oversight boards will still be able to compel witnesses and documents as long as they gain approval by at least half of the local governing body.

■ In a note about a portrait of former Knox Mayor **Tim Burchett** last week, we misidentified his successor. He’s **Glenn Jacobs**, not **Reynolds**. Maybe we should just go ahead and use his professional wrestling name, **Kane**, to avoid confusion. Especially since he got rid of former state Rep. **Roger Kane** as an adviser.

■ Struggles by Senate Finance Chairman **Bo Watson** (R-Chattanooga) to present various amendments to his proposed “Main Street Historic Tourism and Revitalization Act” this week led to some gentle ribbing from colleagues — and an abrupt response by the sponsor.

■ “I do have to point out as someone that handles a \$38 billion budget, that they would be better prepared whenever they came before this committee.” — *Commerce Chairman Paul Bailey* (R-Sparta).

■ “Mister Chairman, I’d agree. I will move this to general sub. We’re done.” — **Watson** in response, placing the measure and two others among dead bills.

■ The House narrowly approved a bill seeking to make Tennessee the 17th state to ban the use of hand-held mobile phones while driving. The House bill sponsored by Rep. **John Holsclaw** (R-Elizabethton) passed 53-38. It takes 50 votes for bills to clear the chamber.

■ Five women were arrested at the state Capitol after camping out near Gov. **Bill Lee’s** office. The protesters want the governor to publicly condemn state Rep. **David Byrd** (R-Waynesboro), who is accused of sexual misconduct with teenage girls when he was their 28-year-old high school basketball coach in the 1980s.

■ The protest seemed a bit misplaced as the governor has no power over who serves in the General Assembly — and because **Lee** has helped keep the pressure on **Byrd** by meeting with one of the lawmaker’s accusers earlier in the session. Byrd later resigned from his subcommittee chairmanship, but not from the House.

■ “You need to leave the premises. I’m asking nicely, OK? If not, you’ll be included with them and be placed under arrest.” — *A state trooper to reporters covering the start of the protest, which lasted 30 hours before the women were removed.*

■ No journalists were arrested after being shuffled out of the building. But the heavy-handed approach by Capitol security raised serious concerns about the media’s ability to cover events surrounding state government.

■ Arkansas has come up with a clever approach to replacing one its Civil War-era statues supplied to the U.S. Capitol. It sent a replacement statue of singer **Johnny Cash**. Hmm. Maybe Tennessee could solve its Capitol statuary controversy over **Nathan Bedford Forrest** by removing the infamous bust and replacing it with the state’s most famous bust — **Dolly Parton**.



## Chris Walker

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**From:** The Tennessee Journal <tnj\_list@list.mleesmith.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, April 12, 2019 12:14 PM  
**To:** Chris Walker  
**Subject:** The Tennessee Journal -April 12, 2019  
**Attachments:** 19tnj15.pdf

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Dear Tennessee Journal subscriber:

Attached is a copy of The Tennessee Journal for April 12, 2019.

To go to The Tennessee Journal website, click on the link below:

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[The Tennessee Journal Online](#)

Your ID is: chris.walker@tn.gov

Your password is: 4927179

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In case you haven't checked out the site, it includes the latest few issues of the newsletter in PDF format (in case you didn't receive one or inadvertently deleted it from your email), the Tennessee Tax Guide in PDF format, and a searchable index and archive of Tennessee Journal issues.

The newsletter is in Adobe Acrobat format. To view it or print it, open it with the free Acrobat reader. You can print out one copy on most laser printers and ink jet printers.

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Thank you.



**Tennessee**  
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## Erin Merrick

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**From:** News Clips  
**Sent:** Friday, April 12, 2019 1:34 PM  
**To:** AE-Governors\_Staff  
**Subject:** The Tennessee Journal - April 12, 2019  
**Attachments:** 19tnj15.pdf

See attached PDF.

# The Tennessee Journal

The weekly insiders newsletter on Tennessee government, politics, and business

Vol. 45, No. 15  
April 12, 2019

## Bring on the FloMo: Greasing the parliamentary skids in House

Republican leadership in the House is preparing to pass the annual flow motion on Monday, a move that tosses out the normal rules for how long bills must wait before moving between committees and onward to floor votes. If all goes to plan, the chamber will be on a path toward adjourning as soon as May 1.

The FloMo, as it is known, sets up a sort of lightning round of the legislative session as lawmakers and staff scramble to hammer out the final details of the annual spending plan and wrap up major legislation still working its way through the committee system.

The added haste increases the potential for mistakes and often gives rise to complaints from members that their concerns don't have an opportunity to get a full airing. It's usually a period of frayed nerves, late nights, pizzas on the floor, and strained relations between the chambers. In other words, a good time is had by all.

House Majority Leader William Lamberth (R-Portland) told colleagues the plan is for the chamber to have the \$38.55 billion budget ready for a full floor vote by April 25 with an eye toward tying up all the loose ends by the following week.

Major policy proposals like freshman Gov. Bill Lee's school voucher bill and an effort to legalize sports gambling in Tennessee made steady progress toward floor votes this week, while the perennial effort to legalize medical marijuana was put off until next year over concerns raised by law enforcement.

Meanwhile, accords appeared to have been reached between the two chambers on anti-abortion legislation and giving the speakers more direct control over the Fiscal Review Committee.

**Betting on gambling.** The proposal to have Tennessee legalize sports gambling advanced by wide margins in House and Senate committees despite opposition from Republican Gov. Bill Lee and dire warnings from dissenting lawmakers about the dangers of legitimized betting. Sponsors did away with brick-and-mortar betting shops at the behest of the governor's office, instead having the measure apply only to online gambling on sporting events.

In the Senate version, 80% of the proceeds would go to the lottery fund, 15% to local governments, and 5% to a statewide gambling addiction fund within the Tennessee Department of Mental Health. Senate sponsor Steve Dickerson (R-Nashville) stressed that those percentages are "pretty fluid" and could be adjusted as the bill makes its way through the Finance Committee.

The bill would impose a 20% privilege tax on online gambling, which would be projected to generate annual revenues of \$41 million for the lottery, \$7.6 million for local governments, and \$2.5 million for the Department of Mental Health. Dickerson argued the bill would bring sports gambling, which is already prevalent, "off the street corners" and into a state-run enterprise that he described as "rigid enough, but not too rigid."

The Senate panel voted 7-2 to advance the bill, with Sens. Shane Reeves and Dawn White (both R-Murfreesboro) voting against. The House State Committee voted 12-5 to advance the version sponsored by embattled Rep. Rick Staples (D-Knoxville). All five votes against the bill came from Republicans.

**Fiscal Review.** The House voted 69-25 to pass legislation introduced by House Speaker Glen Casada (R-Franklin) to strip the Fiscal Review Committee of the power to appoint its own executive director.

The Senate State and Local Government Committee voted 7-2 to advance its own version to a floor vote. Under a change promoted by Speaker Randy McNally (R-Oak Ridge), both chambers would have equal representation on the panel. Current law provides for the House to have nine members, while the Senate has six. Under the change, both chambers would have seven members. The hiring — or firing — of an executive director would have to be made by the agreement of both the House and Senate speakers.

The compromise appears to have taken the steam out of a related measure seeking to give lawmakers the right to make formal appeals of fiscal notes assigned to their favorite bills. The House version sponsored by Rep. Martin Daniel (R-Knoxville) passed on an 82-9 vote last month, but Sen. Mark Pody (R-Lebanon) on Tuesday

put off consideration of the companion bill until the 2020 legislative session.

**Up in smoke.** Attempts to consolidate competing medical marijuana bills didn't succeed in pushing the measure closer to the finish line this year. A week after a panel of law enforcement representatives panned the proposal in the Senate Health Committee, sponsor Steve Dickerson announced he would put off all weed-related legislation until next year. Widespread skepticism among lawmakers may be at odds with growing public opinion on the issue, but that didn't make the bill any more likely to pass this year.

**Abortion bills.** Competing anti-abortion bills had threatened a sort of mutually assured destruction for pro-life advocates as members of both chambers bickered about which of the two measures to pursue.

The House passed a bill seeking to ban abortions as soon as a fetal heartbeat is detected. The Senate agreed with Tennessee Right to Life's assessment that the measure was likely to lose in a court challenge and that a better approach would be to set a ban of most abortions in Tennessee that would "trigger" in the event the U.S. Supreme Court overturns all or part of *Roe v. Wade*.

A House subcommittee killed the trigger bill, while the heartbeat bill languished in the Senate. But abortion rights opponents this week decided to change course so they don't emerge from the session empty-handed. Rep. Ron Gant (R-Rossville) made the motion to revive the trigger measure by pulling it directly to the full Health Committee. A recall requires a majority of all eligible voting members of a committee (including the House speaker). In the case of the Health panel, the minimum threshold was 11 votes. The recall received 12, so it will be on next week's calendar.

**School board association.** Rep. Andy Holt (R-Dresden) attempted a similar maneuver in the House Education Committee by trying to recall a measure previously killed in subcommittee that takes aim at the Tennessee School Boards Association, a prominent school voucher opponent. The measure would do away with a law requiring districts to use the organization for state-mandated training and other services like mediations and evaluations. A recall would have required 13 votes. The motion got only eight affirmative votes.

**Arming teachers.** Rep. Ryan Williams (R-Cookeville) caught many observers off guard last week with a legislative proposal seeking to allow teachers to be armed in public schools. Several critics noted that the measure envisioned no special training for the teachers beyond what is required to obtain a state-issued handgun carry permit. This week Williams withdrew the bill from consideration after hearing from law enforcement officials in his district and from around the state. Williams said he wants to be proactive toward improving school safety in active-shooter situations — and not to have to react once tragedy strikes.

Williams, the former House Republican Caucus chairman whose bid for majority leader fell short last year, has been perhaps the most ostracized lawmaker

among GOP members this session. The reason behind his isolation has never been made clear. House Speaker Glen Casada assigned two subcommittee chairmanships to Democrats, two more to a single Republican member (Jay Reedy of Erin), and another to Rep. Curtis Johnson (R-Clarksville), his most serious rival for the speakership. Not to mention the ill-fated subcommittee chairmanship for Rep. David Byrd (R-Waynesboro).

But Williams got nothing. Parked on the bottom floor of member offices, he has been left to ponder his fate. Pursuing the gun legislation gained him some time back in the spotlight, but had the potential to force Republican colleagues to make some uncomfortable votes. By abandoning the bill, Williams showed himself as a team player and helped make a case for rehabilitation and some regained influence within the inner workings of the Republican caucus. Time will tell.

### Going bigger?

## Lee school voucher bill progresses in diverging House, Senate forms

The Senate Education Committee voted 6-3 to advance Lee's voucher-based Education Savings Account, or ESA, bill on Wednesday. The bill carried by Senate Education Chair Dolores Gresham (R-Somerville) made several changes compared with the version advancing in the House — amendments aimed at broadening the program's scope:

- Expanding the cap on the pilot program to 30,000 students, compared with the 15,000 set in the House.
- Restoring the eligibility of home schoolers who had been removed in the lower chamber over concerns about the potential for misspent government funds.
- Allowing private schools to administer national standardized tests to ESA recipients rather than the Tennessee-specific assessments given in public schools.

The Senate changes appeal to the chamber's Republicans, many of whom have long been more receptive to the idea of introducing vouchers in Tennessee. Contrast that with the House, where the bill has undergone several changes to tighten its application in an effort to placate wary members from rural districts.

Both versions are now headed to the respective House and Senate finance committees. It remains to be seen whether an effort will be made to bring the bills into line before potential floor votes, or if there will be a preference to try to pass them as is and then hammer out any differences in a conference committee setting.

**Senate.** Sen. Joey Hensley of Hohenwald was the lone Republican dissenter in the Education Committee vote. He questioned whether the measure meets its stated goal of targeting students in the worst-performing schools when the legislation would open the ESA program to students attending any school in Shelby, Davidson, Knox, Hamilton, or Madison counties — as long as they meet family income criteria.

Hensley's vote looms large because he also serves on the Finance Committee, the bill's next stop. As of this week, there were only believed to be five solid votes on the panel out of the six needed for the bill to advance.

# Tennessee News Digest

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● Craig Becker, the CEO of the Tennessee Hospital Association for more than 25 years, is retiring after a successor is named. Becker was hired in 1994, on the eve of the state's launch of TennCare.

● Four finalists have been named to become the next chancellor at the University of Tennessee's flagship campus in Knoxville: Auburn University Provost Bill Hardgrave, East Tennessee State University President Brian Noland, Uni-

versity of Nebraska-Lincoln Vice Chancellor Donde Plowman, and Washington University Dean William Tate.

● Gov. Bill Lee appointed Carma Dennis McGee to the western section of the Tennessee Court of Appeals. McGee has been a chancellor in the 24th Judicial District since 2014. If confirmed by the legislature, she will succeed former Appeals Judge Brandon O. Gibson, who gave up her seat to join Lee's Cabinet.

● Workers began demolishing Herschel Greer Stadium in Nashville, the minor league ballpark that opened in 1978 and closed in 2014 after a new home for the Triple-A Sounds was built downtown. The 21-acre Greer site will be incorporated into the campus of the Civil War-era Fort Negley, a Union stronghold constructed by thousands of escaped slaves.

● The former baseball stadium's guitar-shaped scoreboard sold for \$54,815.

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Those strongly backing the bill include Majority Leader Jack Johnson of Franklin and fellow Republican Sens. John Stevens of Huntingdon, Todd Gardenhire of Chattanooga, Ferrell Haile of Gallatin, and Brian Kelsey of Germantown (never mind his re-election campaign declaration that he was giving up his annual voucher push because "I listen to my community").

Meanwhile, Chairman Bo Watson of Chattanooga has voiced concerns about the financial implications of the ESA proposal and has suggested dealing with the bill after the state budget is passed. Lee brought Watson on a flight to Chattanooga last week to make the hard sell on getting the bill passed as soon as possible. But Watson's vote in the Finance Committee remains uncertain, as do those of GOP Caucus Chairman Ken Yager of Kingston and Richard Briggs (R-Knoxville).

**House.** The House version cleared the Finance Subcommittee on a voice vote this week, but three Republicans registered their opposition to the bill: Reps. Patsy Hazlewood of Signal Mountain, Gary Hicks of Rogersville, and Matthew Hill of Jonesborough. The Hill vote was closely watched due to widespread speculation that his longterm opposition to vouchers might be wavering because of his close alliance with new House Speaker Glen Casada. Hill also usually votes in a bloc with his brother, Timothy (R-Blountville), and Micah Van Huss (R-Jonesborough).

House Republican Caucus Chairman Cameron Sexton of Crossville voted against a positive recommendation in the Government Operations Committee, but did not have his name listed among the opponents in the Finance Subcommittee. That's because he was out of the room when the vote was held, he said, adding that he plans to vote against the bill in the full committee.

The voucher bill has drawn a total of 10 negative votes from Republicans (plus one abstention) as it has worked its way through the committee system. But not all of those votes are permanent. For example, Tom Leatherwood (R-Arlington) voted against the measure in subcommittee only to vote in favor when it reached the full Education Committee. Others, like freshman Rep. Brandon Ogles (R-Franklin), have said they won't seek to block the bill from reaching the floor, but haven't committed to voting for it once it gets there either.

**A retro mandate?** In introducing the voucher bill, both Gresham and House sponsor Bill Dunn (R-Knoxville) have argued that Lee campaigned on the concept

of vouchers when he was running for office over the last two years. But that's an exaggeration at best.

Lee was anything but specific about his plans for vouchers on the campaign trail. He said he considered them part of the school choice puzzle, but he studiously avoided getting into details about what sort of program he would endorse when he was a candidate, as governor-elect, or even in the weeks — and hours — before his State of the State address in which he finally revealed the specifics of his plan.

## Automotive roundup

### Volkswagen workers look for new union vote at Chattanooga plant

Production workers at Volkswagen's lone U.S. assembly plant in Chattanooga have filed a petition with the National Labor Relations Board to hold a vote over whether to be represented by the United Auto Workers union. The two-day vote would begin on April 29. About 1,700 workers would be eligible to cast ballots.

The last major attempt to unionize the plant failed on a 712-626 vote in 2014 amid heavy campaigning on both sides. Then-U.S. Sen. Bob Corker (R-Chattanooga) declared Volkswagen would become a "laughingstock" in the business world if it welcomed the UAW into its plant. Labor advocates noted the Chattanooga factory was the only major Volkswagen plant around the world without union representation for its workers.

The UAW did win a vote to represent skilled-trades employees at the plant in 2015. But the effort to allow that small group of workers, who specialize in repairing and maintaining equipment, to negotiate their own contract has been cast into limbo by Volkswagen's refusal to recognize them as a bargaining unit.

**Fisker.** Electric vehicle company Fisker says Tennessee is among 11 states in the running for a plant to assemble a new \$40,000 SUV. The other states under consideration include neighboring Georgia, Kentucky, Missouri, North Carolina, and Virginia. Fisker has hired former Volkswagen Chattanooga manager Don Jackson to head its manufacturing operations.

The company founded by Danish luxury car designer Henrik Fisker is making a pivot to volume production after a previous effort to produce a \$100,000 hybrid sedan fell flat. Fewer than 1,800 were sold, and the predecessor company filed for bankruptcy in 2013.

## Tennessee Notes & Quotes

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■ "I have decided to step down from my leadership position of assistant House minority leader so I can end the unwarranted suffering on my family." — *State Rep. Rick Staples (D-Knoxville) after the House Ethics Subcommittee found he violated the General Assembly's sexual harassment policy. Staples has called the allegations "political character assassination."*

■ The conference committee is scheduled to meet Monday on a state bill to limit the subpoena powers of civilian oversight boards for police departments.

■ While the state House is charging toward adjourning by as early as May 1, House Republican Caucus Chairman **Cameron Sexton** of Crossville warned members not to cancel hotel reservations for the following weeks because of the difficulty in getting downtown rooms later in the month.

■ "If you move those dates, you may be staying out in Mt. Juliet." — **Sexton**.

■ "What's wrong with that?" — *House Finance Chair Susan Lynn (R-Mt. Juliet) in response.*

■ The rumor quickly spread through the Cordell Hull Building that the early May adjournment is necessary because House Speaker **Glen Casada** (R-Franklin) is scheduled to go on a European vacation. But that trip doesn't start until May 24, so there's time to spare.

■ "It's time for tech companies like Google and Facebook to start embracing the spirit of the First Amendment. Not just for their own employees, but for all of the Americans who use their platforms." — *U.S. Sen. Marsha Blackburn (R-Brentwood) in a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing.*

■ "This is an exciting election with the opportunity to flip a State Senate seat and send a message to **Glen Casada** and the Republican party that their platform of hate and division cannot win in Tennessee." — *State Democratic Party Chair Mary Mancini in an email blast about the special election to replace former state Sen. Mark Green (R-Ashland City).*

■ It may just be us, but we'd imagine Senate Speaker **Randy McNally** (R-Oak Ridge) might take more of an interest in the outcome of that race than **Casada**, the speaker of the House.

■ "Funding for construction of the new Chickamauga Lock has been provided for the past five years, so it doesn't make sense for the administration to not include the project in the budget request." — *U.S. Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-Maryville) about the omission in the Trump administration budget of the \$92 million the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers says it needs.*

■ "I applied to law school, but I didn't get in. My SAT scores were too high." — *State Sen. Steve Dickerson (R-Nashville), a physician.*

■ Freshman U.S. Rep. **Tim Burchett** (R-Knoxville) filed a bill to prohibit new federal spending on art in U.S. embassies around the world. Burchett told the *Knoxville News Sentinel* he came up with the legislation

after reading about the State Department's purchase of an \$84,375 sculpture by singer **Bob Dylan** to be installed in a new embassy being built in Mozambique.

■ "Eighty-four thousand dollars is a heck of a lot of money for somebody in East Tennessee.... Dadgumit, we need to get out of that mentality. We are in debt, and we're just running towards socialism. We can't continue at this rate if we're to survive." — **Burchett**.

■ The newspaper notes that a portrait of **Burchett** was placed on display in the Knox County Mayor's Office after he left that position last year. Successor **Glenn Reynolds** commissioned the portrait for \$427.50.

■ "Money doesn't talk, it swears." — *Dylan in his 1965 song "It's Alright, Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)."*

■ Nashville Mayor **David Briley** raised \$189,000 in the first quarter for his re-election campaign and had \$400,000 remaining on hand. Democratic state Rep. **John Ray Clemmons** raised \$41,000 and had a balance of about \$104,000 for his challenge. Conservative commentator **Carol Swain**, a former Vanderbilt professor, raised \$118,000 (including \$1,600 each from auto dealer **Lee Beaman** and **David Black**, husband of former Republican U.S. Rep. Diane Black) and had \$116,000 remaining. The election is in August.

■ "I'm so inspired by the work you do, specifically in organizing the recent petition of Tennessee faith leaders standing up against the 'Slate of Hate' in our state legislature." — *Pop superstar Taylor Swift in a letter accompanying a \$113,000 donation to the Tennessee Equality Project, an LGBT advocacy group.*

■ **Swift** broke her silence on political matters last year when she endorsed former Democratic Gov. **Phil Bredesen's** unsuccessful bid for the U.S. Senate. She also endorsed U.S. Rep. **Jim Cooper** (D-Nashville), who faced nominal opposition in his re-election bid.

■ "We've had substantial offers to take every piece of wood and panel and move it." — *Joel Weinshanker, head of Elvis Presley Enterprises, to the Wall Street Journal about offers he said he has received to move Graceland from Memphis to Nashville or even to Asia.*

■ "I don't think they're moving." — *Memphis Mayor Jim Strickland about the claims that came amid delays of a City Council vote needed to pave the way for incentives to expand the Graceland campus.*

■ The Tennessee Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus has named its annual dinner after Rep. **Ron Lollar** (R-Bartlett), who died in August. The second annual event is scheduled for April 23 in Nashville. Attendees reserving a \$1,500 table for eight will receive a custom Taurus 1911 Commander .45 ACP with the Tennessee tri-star engraved on the grip. The gun is called "The Legislator."

■ Sen. **Mike Bell** (R-Riceville), who co-chairs the sportsmen's caucus with Rep. **Jeremy Faison** (R-Cosby), is also in charge of supplying this year's "mystery meat." Last year, it was otter.

■ Some mysteries are just better off being left unsolved.

**From:** News Clips  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 11, 2019 7:32 AM  
**To:** AE-Governors\_Staff  
**Subject:** Daily News Clips - April 11

## Thursday, April 11

APRIL 11, 2019 TNFINANCE

**Gov. Lee signs Sgt. Daniel Baker Act into law** (WTVF-TV) Tennessee is removing one state court's review before executing inmates under legislation signed by Republican Gov. Bill Lee. With Lee's approval Tuesday, Tennessee in July will begin skipping the state Court of Criminal Appeals and provide automatic state Supreme Court death penalty reviews. Lee spokeswoman Laine Arnold has said the governor was deferring to the Legislature's will on the legislation. [LINK](#)

**Gov. Lee signs law that will bring alcohol to East TN campus venues for concerts** (WBIR-TV) Governor Bill Lee has signed a bill into law that will allow alcohol sales at Neyland Stadium and Thompson-Boling Arena. It's a topic that's long been discussed, especially when it comes to big events and concerts. Republican Senator Becky Duncan Massey of Knoxville introduced the bill in February that would allow alcohol at special events and concerts—but not games. That's because of the SEC's strict no-alcohol policy. While the law went into effect immediately, UT will still need to create a policy for sales of alcohol on campus. [LINK](#)

**Bill allowing alcohol sales at Neyland and Thompson-Boling signed into law** (WVLT-TV) A bill allowing limited alcohol sales at campus venues such as Thompson-Boling Arena and Neyland Stadium for events that aren't linked to NCAA competitions has been signed into law by Governor Bill Lee Monday. The bill was passed in the state house on a 70-21 vote. The bill passed in the Tenn. Senate on Tuesday with a 27-4 vote. Some of Tennessee's largest public venues are located on the University of Tennessee Campuses, where alcohol sales are prohibited. Venue operators have long contested the largest concerts, major acts, and even conferences bypass campus facilities because of this alcohol policy. [LINK](#)

**Governor Lee may sign bill that prevents local legislatures from regulating plastic bags**(Vanderbilt Hustler) Legislation addressing the usage of plastic products has gained traction across the country, particularly within recent years. Enacted regulations have led to reductions in tens of millions of pounds of plastic waste per year, and in 2019 alone, state lawmakers have proposed over 95 bills pertaining to plastic bags. Nonetheless, in some states, these environmental efforts have been challenged, predominantly by members of the GOP. And Tennessee is no exception. According to a March Tennessean article, Governor Bill Lee reportedly plans to sign a bill that will prevent plastic bag regulations from being locally implemented across the state. [LINK](#)

**Gov. Bill Lee fills vacancy on Tennessee Court of Appeals, Western Section** (Commercial Appeal) Gov. Bill Lee has appointed Chancellor Carma Dennis McGee to the Tennessee Court of Appeals, Western Section, replacing Brandon O. Gibson, who earlier this year was named senior adviser in the governor's office. McGee, 48, has been chancellor of the 24th Judicial District since 2014 and was previously a partner with the law firm McGee & Dennis in Savannah, Tennessee. "Chancellor McGee's experience and knowledge will make her an excellent judge on the Court of Appeals," Lee said in a statement. "Tennessee is fortunate to have her in the Western Section, and I am grateful. [LINK](#)

**Chancellor Carma McGee appointed appellate judge for West Tennessee** (Paris Post-Intelligencer) Carma McGee, chancellor for the 24th Judicial District for the last five years, will be leaving that post after being appointed by Gov. Bill Lee to the Tennessee Court of Appeals, Western Section. The appointment was announced Wednesday. McGee will replace Judge Brandon O. Gibson on the appellate court. Gibson was



appointed as a senior adviser in the governor's office earlier this year. McGee, who is from Savannah, has been chancellor for the district since 2014. The district includes Henry, Benton, Carroll, Decatur and Hardin counties. [LINK](#)

**Rick Byrd, Gov. Bill Lee and mayor David Briley wave Predators rally towel for Game 1**(Tennessean) A few days into retirement, Rick Byrd swung by Bridgestone Arena on Wednesday. And he had company. Byrd, the former Belmont coach who announced his retirement last week, was joined by Nashville governor Bill Lee and mayor David Briley as the towel wavers before the Predators' postseason opener against the Dallas Stars. [LINK](#)

**Four finalists named for UT-Knoxville chancellor** (TN Journal) Four finalists have been named to become the next chancellor at the University of Tennessee's flagship campus in Knoxville. They will visit the school and participate in public forums between April 16 and April 18. Here are the finalists and times they will be on campus ... The forums will be live-streamed. [LINK](#)

**University of Tennessee-Knoxville names four finalists for chancellor** (News Sentinel) The University of Tennessee-Knoxville has named four finalists for chancellor, including the president of East Tennessee State University and the provost at Auburn. The candidates will visit campus next week, April 16-18, to visit administrators, faculty, staff and students. Each candidate for the university's top leadership position also will hold an open forum while on campus. The announcement of the finalists comes nearly one year after UT fired Beverly Davenport, the highest-paid chancellor in the school's history who was earning a \$585,000 annual base salary. [LINK](#)

**UT considering ETSU's Noland for chancellor** (Johnson City Press) East Tennessee State University President Brian Noland is one of four candidates being considered as the next chancellor of the University of Tennessee-Knoxville, ETSU announced Wednesday morning. "Earlier today, the University of Tennessee-Knoxville conveyed that I have accepted the nomination for consideration as its next chancellor. [LINK](#)

**Community reacts to ETSU President Brian Noland named UT Chancellor Finalist** (WJHL-TV) ETSU's President Brian Noland is a finalist to become the next UT Knoxville Chancellor. Doctor Brian Noland has been named one of four finalists for the chancellor position. Noland earned a PH.D. in political science from the University of Tennessee and once was a finalist for the job of UT president. Eight-years-ago, he ended up at ETSU where he led the return of the school's football program, and the construction of a new stadium and performing arts center. [LINK](#)

**ETSU President Brian Noland a finalist for UT Chancellor** (WCYB-TV) ETSU President Brian Noland has accepted the nomination for consideration of the position of Chancellor at the University of Tennessee, according to a statement he issued to WCYB on Wednesday. "I want to thank the ETSU community for your patience and support as my family explores this opportunity. I assure everyone that my focus remains on having an outstanding close to the spring semester, and I look forward to celebrating the accomplishments of our graduates at Commencement," the president of the Johnson City school said. [LINK](#)

**Next week will prove if Tennessee is ready for TNReady. Here's how state testing is going so far.** (Chalkbeat Tennessee) Following three consecutive years of testing problems, Tennessee is trying again. So far, students have taken about 43,000 state exams online this week. By Friday, that number is expected to reach 100,000, and about 700,000 by the end of the month. An additional 1.3 million tests will be completed on paper.

"We're starting much stronger this year than we did last year," Tennessee's Education Commissioner Penny Schwinn told reporters Wednesday. [LINK](#)

**School bus ads: Lebanon and Maury, Putnam counties see payoff; should others follow?**(Tennessean) The Lebanon Special School District is now among a handful of Tennessee school systems that make their buses available for advertising as a potential revenue source. Lebanon's bus advertisements are outsourced to a company named District Solutions that handles the ad sales and renewals, design and application. The Lebanon Special School District keeps 55 percent of the bus ad revenue, with "very little effort on our part," said Becky Kegley, the school system's director of support services. Lebanon's school board approved bus ads earlier this year. They have generated about \$16,000 for the district so far with hopes revenue can max out around \$35,000 annually for its approximately 30 buses. [LINK](#)

**Rhea County woman arrested and charged with TennCare fraud** (Times Free Press) A Rhea County woman is charged with TennCare fraud for falsely reporting her income and household composition in order to obtain TennCare benefits, according to a news release from the Tennessee Office of Inspector General. The OIG, with the assistance of the Rhea County Sheriff's Office, on Wednesday announced the arrest of Kayla Hickman, 27, of Dayton. She is charged with TennCare fraud and theft of services over \$10,000 for allegedly failing to report that the father of her two children lived in her home and contributed to the household income. Both factors made her ineligible for TennCare. [LINK](#)

**Rhea County woman charged with TennCare fraud** (WTVF-TV) A Rhea County woman has been charged with TennCare fraud for falsely reporting her income and household composition in order to obtain TennCare benefits. The Office of Inspector General (OIG), with the assistance of the Rhea County Sheriff's Office, today announced the arrest of Kayla Hickman, 27, of Dayton. She is charged with TennCare fraud and theft of services over \$10,000 for allegedly failing to report that the father of her two children lived in her home and contributed to the household income. Both factors made her ineligible for TennCare. [LINK](#)

**Rhea Co. Woman Charged with TennCare Fraud** (WIHG Radio) Aided by the Rhea County Sheriff's Office, Inspector General Kim Harmon today announced the arrest of 27-year-old Kayla Hickman of Dayton on charges that could put her behind bars for up to ten years. Hickman is charged with TennCare fraud and theft of services over \$10,000 because she falsely reported her income and household makeup. She allegedly failed to report the father of her children was living in the home and contributing to the household income, both of which would have made her ineligible for TennCare. [LINK](#)

**Ecoli outbreak update: Cases now across Tennessee; finding source could be challenge** (Tennessean) Finding the source of a multistate outbreak of E. coli will be a challenge for health investigators, a Vanderbilt University Medical Center physician said. So far, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports 96 confirmed cases of E. coli O103 in five states in the outbreak, including 26 in Tennessee. The bulk of those — 21, including nine in Knox County — are in the eastern part of the state, but there are now three confirmed cases in Middle Tennessee and two in West Tennessee, said Bill Christian, associate director of communications for the Tennessee Department of Health. [LINK](#)

**Tennessee leads nation in medical bankruptcies** (WTVF-TV) NewsChannel 5's newest community initiative is "Medical Debt Rescue." The goal of the project is to shed light on a lopsided medical debt system that has left thousands of Tennesseans with crippling debt and forced many into foreclosure. Michelle Johnson, Executive Director of the Tennessee Justice Center, stopped by OpenLine Tuesday night and gave some startling statistics. For example, Johnson says 70% of Tennesseans have some medical debt and the state leads the nation in medical bankruptcies. [LINK](#)

**The State of Tennessee sues Franklin healthcare clinic in TennCare fraud case** (WTVF-TV) The U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Tennessee has made a public suit against ProHealth Rural Health Services, Inc. and its president and CEO, Ray White. The suit was filed by Attorney General Herbert H. Slatery. As a Federally Qualified Community Health Center (FQHC) Look-Alike, ProHealth — located in Franklin — provides healthcare to all patients, whether they can pay or not. That entitles ProHealth to receive prospective payment service (PPS) payments. PPS payments are a guaranteed minimum amount of money paid for each Medicaid patient visit. [LINK](#)

**AG seeks \$18 million from Franklin-based Proheath in TennCare-fraud case** (Tennessean) The Attorney General is suing a Franklin health care clinic after the Tennessee Comptroller's office found they had submitted more than \$6 million in inaccurate claims. The suit seeks \$18 million in damages. The filing said Dr. Ray White, the clinics' chief executive officer, knowingly participated in the scheme, which involved using a software system to consistently overstate the number of patient visits. The audit, released Wednesday, revealed ProHealth Rural Health Services Inc. over-reported the number of TennCare patients that visited its Middle Tennessee clinics by 56,251 visits. [LINK](#)

**TN governor's education savings account proposal presses on** (WMC-TV) TN Governor Bill Lee's education savings account proposal cleared another hurdle Wednesday, but with some tweaks. The school choice plan

would give some families the ability to use state funds to send their child to a private school. “There is no reason why we cannot give parents a choice in how they educate their children,” said Dolores Gresham, senator. A six to three vote moved Lee’s education savings account proposal through the Senate Education Committee. It came with changes that have already cleared the House. The approved amendment doubled the cap on the number of students who could participate to 30,000. [LINK](#)

**Gov. Bill Lee’s education savings account plan advances, but Senate makes major changes to its version** (Tennessean) Gov. Bill Lee’s proposal to bring education savings accounts to Tennessee cleared two legislative hurdles Wednesday, but not before the Senate made significant changes to its version of the controversial legislation. The latest amendment, introduced by Senate Education Committee Chairwoman Sen. Dolores Gresham, would permit up to 30,000 students in the six lowest-performing districts and the Achievement School District to use the program to attend private schools or cover other education expenses. [LINK](#)

**Immigrant group says Lee’s voucher bill targets undocumented students and is ‘doomed to fail’ in court** (Times Free Press) Republican Gov. Bill Lee’s education savings account legislation advanced in Senate and House committees on Wednesday, but an immigrant rights group is charging the governor’s bill is “bucking the Constitution” because it seeks to exclude undocumented children. “This bill suffers from serious constitutional and legal problems that will undoubtedly lead to costly tax-payer funded litigation that is doomed to fail in the courts,” reads a statement from Lisa Sherman-Nikolaus, policy director at the Tennessee Immigrant & Refugee Rights Coalition. [LINK](#)

**Tennessee voucher-like bill version adds back homeschooling** (AP) Gov. Bill Lee’s voucher-style proposal has restored the option of paying for homeschooling. A Senate panel advanced the Republican’s key school choice initiative Wednesday. The legislation, expected to cost \$125 million over five years, has House and Senate committee stops remaining. The Senate version would double the cap on the education savings accounts to 30,000 students, instead of 15,000. [LINK](#)

**Senate Education panel gives nod to education savings accounts** (Daily Memphian) The Senate Education Committee approved Gov. Bill Lee’s education savings account initiative Wednesday, paving the way for public dollars to follow students to private schools. In a 6-3 vote, the committee sent Senate Bill 795 to the Senate Finance, Ways & Means Committee, with Sen. Brian Kelsey voting in favor of the measure and Senate Minority Chairman Raumesh Akbari opposing. The bill would allow parents to apply for education savings accounts for their children, about \$7,300 in Basic Education Program funds, which could be used to pay for private school, home schooling, transportation, computer equipment, postsecondary courses, therapy and several other items. [LINK](#)

**“It’s not a real choice.” Hamilton County School Board offers alternatives to voucher bill**(WTVG-TV) On Wednesday, lawmakers debated an education bill that could change the way Hamilton County Schools function. Governor Bill Lee is pushing a voucher program that would give families \$7,300 to send their student to a private school. That’s HB0939 and SB0795 which are education savings accounts. The bills are essentially a voucher program. The idea is to give families options of where they send their kids to school. But parents and grandparents in Hamilton County are not sold. They’re raising questions about who would actually benefit from a voucher program. [LINK](#)

**‘The life he was dealt:’ TennCare bill for kids with severe disabilities now behind the budget** (Tennessean) It would cost Ryan Tidwell’s parents nearly \$2,000 a week — more than \$100,000 a year — to pay for their son’s home health care out of pocket. Ryan was born with spina bifida. Because his spine didn’t form properly, he is unable to walk or sit up on his own. He depends on a ventilator to breathe. He is wheelchair bound. Ryan’s dad is a local police officer and a veteran who served in Afghanistan. His mom works in a doctor’s office. On April 15, they will lose Ryan’s TennCare coverage because their salaries are too high. [LINK](#)

**Legislation cutting time Tennessee car owners have to claim towed cars goes to governor** (WZTV-TV) Legislation shortening the time vehicle owners have to claim their vehicles if it gets towed is heading to Governor Bill Lee’s desk. SB 1493, sponsored by Senator Paul Bailey (R-Sparta) passed in the Senate in April

and the House version, HB 538 was passed by the House on Wednesday. The bill cuts in half the time towing companies need to wait before placing a vehicle up for auction. Current legislation forces towing companies to wait 60-75 days before selling a vehicle and the current bill cuts that back to 30-45 days. [LINK](#)

**Fiscal review changes advance in House, Senate** (Nashville Post) Changes to the Tennessee General Assembly's Fiscal Review Committee easily passed the House and the Senate State and Local Government Committee Wednesday. The bill's supporters argue the measure will reduce political influence over the body that makes sometimes determinative cost estimates for proposed legislation. Critics argue just the opposite. The bill would give the speakers of both chambers, rather than the committee itself, the authority to hire the committee's executive director. [LINK](#)

**Tennessee Lawmakers Pass On Medical Marijuana For Another Year To Focus On 'Grassroots' Effort** (WPLN Radio) The debate on medical marijuana in the Tennessee General Assembly has been postponed for at least one more year. The latest version of the bill — a compromise between four lawmakers with similar proposals — was not enough to garner support from the Republican supermajority. Nashville Republican Steve Dickerson, the measure's sponsor in the state Senate, requested the delay. He's hopeful the legislation could be embraced by more of his colleagues next year. [LINK](#)

**Medical cannabis bill hangs out to dry** (Daily Memphian) Sen. Steve Dickerson, a Nashville Republican carrying Senate Bill 572, said Wednesday he is "rolling" the legislation until 2020 after it ran into trouble in the House. Sen. Katrina Robinson, a Memphis Democrat, is a prime co-sponsor. The measure was to be heard Wednesday in the Senate Health and Welfare Committee, but the timing on that meeting was disrupted by lengthy debate over the governor's education savings account bill, which passed. [LINK](#)

**Tennessee medical cannabis bill delayed until 2020** (Times Free Press) Efforts to legalize medical marijuana are dead for the year in the Tennessee Legislature after the main Senate sponsor said he was delaying the effort until 2020. Sen. Steve Dickerson, a physician, announced the decision as the Senate Health and Welfare Committee got underway Wednesday afternoon. The House sponsor, Rep. Bryan Terry, R-Murfreesboro, returned his companion's bill to the House clerk's desk. Prospects for the bill's passage were dim. Dickerson and Terry's legislation would have legalized cannabis for medical purposes, creating a highly regulated three-tier system of growers, processors and licensed dispensaries with pharmacists on staff. [LINK](#)

**Tennessee medical marijuana bills are dead until 2020** (Tennessean) Tennessee lawmakers have abruptly delayed all efforts to legalize medical marijuana until next year, abandoning several bills moments before the controversial topic was expected to be debated for the first time. Sen. Steve Dickerson, a doctor who is one of the biggest advocates in the Tennessee legislature for medical marijuana, said during a Senate hearing Wednesday he was regrettably delaying all bills involving cannabis until 2020. The House also had rolled the bills until next year, Dickerson said. Less than an hour before that hearing, Dickerson had intended to amend an existing bill to introduce a detailed proposal to legalize and regulate medical marijuana throughout Tennessee. [LINK](#)

**Medical cannabis bill fails in House and Senate** (WTVF-TV) The battle for a medical cannabis bill has failed in the legislature. The Senate shot down the major piece of legislation pushing the issue. Lawmakers debated the bill which included a number of efforts to expand legal use across Tennessee Wednesday. One measure would have significantly expanded access to medical marijuana, but it was rolled to next year by the sponsor in an effort to get the bill to another subcommittee the sponsor thinks will be more favorable toward it. [LINK](#)

**Video: Cannabis bills pushed back to 2020 by Senate Health and Wellness Committee** (Tennessean) All bills concerning medical marijuana will not be moving forward this session in the Tennessee General Assembly. [LINK](#)

**Moms raising LGBTQ kids gather in solidarity** (Tennessean) When Sara Cunningham's son came out of the closet, she went into hers. Cunningham belonged to a conservative Baptist church, one that believes homosexuality and suicide are unforgivable sins. She tried and tried to "pray the gay away." She believed her son was going to hell. But when faced with choosing between her faith and her son, she chose her child. Cunningham is part of a collective of moms raising children who identify as LGBTQ. Most of these women

come from Christian backgrounds. Nearly all were devastated when their children came out to them. The moms didn't know where to turn. [LINK](#)

**Tennessee House passes Rep. Robin Smith's proton radiation therapy bill vetoed last year by then-Gov. Bill Haslam** (Times Free Press) A bill requiring the state health insurance plan allow use of proton radiation therapy to treat cancer, vetoed a year ago by then-Gov. Bill Haslam, is now on its way to the desk of Tennessee's new governor, Bill Lee, after winning overwhelming approval in the House on Tuesday. The bill, sponsored by Rep. Robin Smith, R-Hixson, cleared the chamber on a 94-0 vote with one member voting present. The measure previously passed the Senate. [LINK](#)

**Dems' Medicaid expansion plays done for the year** (Nashville Post) Democratic lawmakers' ongoing quest to expand Medicaid in Tennessee likely came to an end this week, at least for the year. Despite opposition from legislative leadership and new Republican Gov. Bill Lee, members of the minority party filed several bills that would have allowed Lee to negotiate Medicaid expansion with the federal government. A House subcommittee killed one proposal, from Rep. Gloria Johnson (D-Knoxville), on Wednesday. She called her plan the "Mike Pence Medicaid Act of 2019," in reference to the expansion of Medicaid under then-Indiana Gov. Pence, but Republicans were not amused. [LINK](#)

**Meet 'Nash', the therapy dog of Tennessee's Capitol Hill** (WKRN-TV) People get pets for all kinds of reasons, but a Tennessee lawmaker never imagined what would happen to the dog he brought to Nashville. "He is someone I thank God is not running for office because he would win hands down, everybody would vote for him," said Sen. Jon Lundberg about his white English lab. On their 20th wedding anniversary, Sen. Lundberg's wife got the dog to keep him company at the capitol "because I live 300 miles away from Nashville" in Bristol. So, the lawmaker started calling the white lab "Nash." [LINK](#)

**Rep. Rick Staples facing 'remedial measures' after violating sexual harassment policy** (Tennessean) Rep. Rick Staples has been directed to take "preventative action" and "remedial measures" after an internal investigation found he violated the legislature's sexual harassment policy. According to a letter sent April 1 to House Speaker Glen Casada, R-Franklin, from the Workplace Discrimination and Harassment Subcommittee, part of the House Ethics Committee, the group met to review complaints filed against Staples, D-Knoxville. "Based upon the completed staff investigation, which included interviews with all parties, the Ethics Subcommittee finds that Rep. Staples violated the policy," the letter reads. [LINK](#)

**Knoxville Rep. Rick Staples Violated Legislature's Harassment Policy, Committee Finds** (WPLN Radio) A Democratic state representative has been found in violation of the legislature's sexual harassment policy, but colleagues have stopped short of recommending his removal or any disciplinary action. A letter sent by the House Workplace Discrimination & Harassment Subcommittee to Speaker Glen Casada earlier this month and released today, Knoxville Rep. Rick Staples was directed to take "preventive action" to "ensure the violation does not reoccur." [LINK](#)

**Ethics panel says Rep. Rick Staples violated sexual harassment rule** (AP) A Democratic Tennessee lawmaker has been instructed to take "preventative action" after a House ethics panel found he violated the General Assembly's sexual harassment policy. House Speaker Glen Casada's office received a letter from the House Workplace Discrimination and Harassment Subcommittee on April 1, which said the panel had reviewed complaints against Rep. Rick Staples. The Associated Press has since obtained a copy of the letter. In it, the subcommittee directed the Knoxville Democrat to take actions to ensure the violation does not happen again and to report back to the subcommittee. [LINK](#)

**Lawmaker's son accused of trying to bribe the officer charging him with DUI** (WDEF-TV) A Chattanooga man has been charged with second offense D-U-I and attempted bribery of an arresting officer. 30 year old Stephen Carter was arrested on Monday night. His first D-U-I was in 2008. Carter's attorney Jerry Summers confirmed the charges, including an alleged attempt to bribe the arresting officer. Carter is the son of state representative Mike Carter. [LINK](#)

**Sen. Alexander critical of Pres. Trump's budget, says more Chickamauga Lock funding needed** (WTVC-TV) Tennessee Senator Lamar Alexander (R) says this year's budget submitted by President Trump does not

contain enough money to pay for ongoing construction at the Chickamauga Lock. Aging concrete has caused structural concerns at the current lock, and an upgrade project began back in 2005. Crews have been working to transform the lock from a 60 by 360-foot lock to a 100 by 600-foot lock with improved locking efficiency and restored structural issues since 2015. [LINK](#)

**Roe: 'What's going on at the border is tough'** (Kingsport Times-News) U.S. Rep. Phil Roe weighed in Wednesday on the change in leadership at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the surge of migrants at the southern border. "I know then-Secretary (Kristjen) Nielsen (who has resigned), shows it was a very, very tough job," Roe, R-Tenn., said in a conference call with reporters. "I don't know the issue with ... the Secret Service head (who was fired by President Trump). I think it had something to do with what happened out at Mar-A-Lago, with this woman getting in there with electronic equipment who was basically a spy. ... What's going on at the border is tough. We're going to do a town hall in the next couple weeks at home just on immigration and hear what's on people's minds about that issue. [LINK](#)

**Roe plans to host immigration town hall in his district** (Johnson City Press) U.S. Rep. Phil Roe, R-1st, told reporters via conference call Wednesday that he plans to host an immigration town hall in his district in a few weeks. The town hall news came after Roe was asked about the departures of Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen and Secret Service Director Randolph Alles. "I know then-Secretary Nielsen. She had a very, very tough job. I don't know the issue with the Secret Service head. I think it had something to do with what happened down at Mar-a-Lago (with) this woman getting in there with electronic equipment. Basically, a spy. I don't know what she was. That will have to be worked out and evaluated," Roe said. [LINK](#)

**Have questions for Rep. Mark Green? Here's when his town halls are** (Tennessean) At the end of the week, Rep. Mark Green will hold a Tennessee Seventh Congressional District town hall in Brentwood. Green announced the dates on Wednesday, and will kick off his tour on Friday at 3 p.m. in Brentwood. His last town hall in Williamson County was in December. "Town halls are invaluable to me as a member of Congress," Green said. "Please bring your ideas and concerns so I can better represent Tennessee's 7th District in Washington. Constituent input guides my legislative priorities in Washington, and I need to hear what is working and what is not working for us." [LINK](#)

**United Auto Workers officials want no 'outside interference' in proposed union election at Volkswagen's Chattanooga plant** (Times Free Press) United Auto Workers officials say they hope the focus of a proposed union election in coming weeks at Volkswagen's Chattanooga plant is on the factory's workforce and not on outsiders. During the 2014 election, there was "a lot of outside interference," said Steve Cochran, president of UAW Local 42 in Chattanooga. "We hope that doesn't happen like the last time." Volkswagen and the United Auto Workers are waiting for the National Labor Relations Board to decide whether to approve the holding of an election for the Chattanooga plant. [LINK](#)

**Coca-Cola Consolidated to move Memphis production facility to Arkansas, eliminate jobs** (Commercial Appeal) Coca-Cola Consolidated, which makes, bottles and distributes more than 300 Coca-Cola products and employs about 450 people at its Memphis facility, will soon move a part of its operation to West Memphis, Arkansas. The company has plans to build a \$33 million addition to its production facility in West Memphis that is expected to open in the last quarter of 2020, company spokesperson Brian Nick said Wednesday. Once the facility opens, the production team currently working in Memphis will move to West Memphis. [LINK](#)

**If it wasn't already clear, Nashville is officially no longer a hidden gem. It's one of the nation's best places to live.** (Tennessean) Nashville has been named the 15th best place to live in the country — and it's not because of the honky-tonks. Well, not just because of the honky-tonks. "Food is also a really big deal," new U.S. News and World Report ranking said. Even with local gripes, many justified, about housing costs, commutes and too many tourists on scooters, the city on the Cumberland River made the list between San Jose, California, and Asheville, North Carolina, in an analysis of 125 metro areas nationwide. [LINK](#)

**County opens new crisis center for crime victims** (Memphis Flyer) Officials cut the ribbon last week on a new center for the victims of rape and other crimes. Operating on three floors in a rehabbed county building at 1060 Madison, the Crime Victims and Rape Crisis Center staffs victim advocates and counselors who provide

comprehensive victim support with an array of services. The new center is a rebranded version of the two agencies, Sandy Bromley, director of the center, said. The Crime Victims and Rape Crisis Center was formerly located on Madison about a mile away from its new home. [LINK](#)

**Nashville's SAFE clinic exceeds expected number of rape exams** (WSMV-TV) New numbers released by the Sexual Assault Center (SAC) reveal more people than expected in 2019 are requesting forensic rape exams at its newly opened SAFE clinic. Officials at the SAFE clinic, located at 101 French Landing Drive, tell News4 the city's first and only stand-alone, non-hospital clinic has performed 112 rape exams since it opened in January, more than they were expecting all year. Statistics show every 98 seconds someone is sexually assaulted in the United States. [LINK](#)

**KENTUCKY: Kentucky to use rapid DNA tests for sex assault cases** (AP) Kentucky is helping to pioneer new crime-fighting technology that allows rapid DNA testing to more quickly identify sexual assault offenders and clear those falsely accused, officials said Wednesday. The equipment, known as the ANDE Rapid DNA system, can generate DNA identification from forensic samples in less than two hours, Kentucky law enforcement officials said. Kentucky is at the forefront nationally in embracing the technology, they said. "If you are a sexual predator in ... Kentucky, we're going to come after you," Kentucky State Police Commissioner Richard Sanders said at a press conference. [LINK](#)

### **OPINION**

**Bill Gibbons: Still BLUE-CRUSHing crime data in Memphis streets** (Commercial Appeal) Data-driven policing involves smart use of crime data to deploy law enforcement resources in the right places at the right times to have a maximum positive impact on the crime rate. New York City was the first major city to implement such an approach in a day -to-day consistent fashion, beginning in 1994. Referred to as CompStat (short for Compare Statistics), it is credited with creating dramatic reductions in New York's crime rate, moving it from having one of the highest crime rates among American cities to having one of the lowest crime rates. [LINK](#)

**Bill Freeman: Casada finally takes a step in the right direction against Rep. Byrd** (Nashville Scene) State House Speaker Glen Casada, who took too long to do so, made the right move in late March when he removed Rep. David Byrd (R-Waynesboro) from the education subcommittee chairmanship position to which Casada had appointed him. Last year, multiple women said Byrd sexually abused them in the 1980s when he was their high school basketball coach. The public outcry over those accusations seemingly had grown too loud to ignore. Or maybe there were other political pressures that pushed the speaker to strip Byrd of his leadership position. [LINK](#)

**Editorial: Sip slowly on campus, ETSU** (Johnson City Press) Anyone who has ever attended a college sporting event or concert probably knows that alcohol makes its way in one way or another. Despite measures intended to keep out any number of things, including flasks and bottles, clever students find a way to sneak spirits into arenas and stadiums. But the inevitable is no reason to make something easy or to sanction it, especially given the number of college students under drinking age and the potential for alcohol-fueled arguments among fans. [LINK](#)

**Column: Can Bounds bounce Dunn?** (KnoxTNToday) There's a storm a'coming if school board member Patti Bounds takes on state Rep. Bill Dunn in the Republican Primary of 2020. Dunn, 57, was elected in 1994. Bounds and others on the local school board are battling hard to stop legislation that Dunn is carrying to pay a state subsidy to children in private schools. Knox TN Today columnist Frank Cagle has written about problems with this bill here and here. You would expect public school leaders to oppose putting tax money into private schools. And you would expect Dunn, whose five kids were schooled at home and in church schools, to support vouchers. [LINK](#)

**State Rep. John Holsclaw: Republican-led initiative to secure Tennessee schools passes House** (Elizabethton Star) This week, Republican lawmakers passed House Bill 947, which will help secure our Tennessee schools and provide additional safety resources to protect our future leaders. The initiative proposes a \$30 million investment for the school safety grant fund and additional changes to existing law to prioritize the distribution of these grants to help secure school resource officers and other safety measures. Total proposed funding for

school resources officers and additional safety measures for FY 2019-2020 is \$50 million. Approximately \$10 million of this funding total was allocated last year, \$30 million is new money as part of the Governor's proposed budget. [LINK](#)

**Jackson Baker: Shelby County Democrats: The Gang That Couldn't Shoot Straight. Again.**(Memphis Flyer) In August, 2016, Tennessee Democratic Party chair Mary Mancini announced that the state party executive committee had voted to disband the Shelby County Democratic Party, a hopelessly fractious organization that, as Mancini noted, had experienced "many years of dysfunction." One year later, in August 2017, a reconstituted local party took shape at a convention that crowned months of focus-group activity in tandem with the state party. Corey Strong, a Shelby County Schools administrator and a military reservist, was elected chair of a new body that possessed both an executive committee and a larger "grassroots" council. [LINK](#)

**Editorial: It's no surprise — Sullivan County needs a new jail** (Kingsport Times-News) It's too soon to hire a project manager even before a consultant has reported on options for the overcrowded Sullivan County jail. But Commissioner Mark Vance's early focus on what will be a costly undertaking is to be appreciated. Perhaps other commissioners should join Vance in discussing an aspect that will most certainly come from that report, and that is how to pay for what will be a significant cost for county taxpayers. [LINK](#)

**Guest column: Stagnant funding forces young doctors to serve residencies in other states**(Tennessean) If you've ever needed to see a doctor in Tennessee, odds are you've waited a long time for your appointment. It's no secret that Tennessee has a shortage of physicians. This affects not only appointment availability, but also health outcomes. Access to care is a huge determinant to the health status of communities, and Gov. Bill Lee has recently supported expanding primary care across the state. At his State of the State address on March 4, Lee pledged upwards of \$8.6 million towards Graduate Medical Education funding to support resident physicians in Tennessee's rural communities. We support this initiative, and with the help of you and our state legislature, this funding will dramatically expand access to medical care in Tennessee. [LINK](#)



**From:** News Clips  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 10, 2019 7:09 AM  
**To:** AE-Governors\_Staff  
**Subject:** Daily News Clips - April 10

## Wednesday, April 10

APRIL 10, 2019

**Manufacturer donates software for MTSU engineering program** (Murfreesboro Post) Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee joined Middle Tennessee State University in thanking Siemens for the donation of a \$2 million software program for the mechatronics engineering program. Siemens Digital Industries Software, a corporate partner of the College of Basic and Applied Sciences, donated the software, according to an MTSU press release. The software gives students access to the same technology that global manufacturers use to develop products in the automotive, aerospace, machinery and high-tech electronics industries. Lee told the audience that companies are “longing” for employees with skills that prepare them for such careers. Programs like MTSU’s, with partnerships with companies like Siemens, can help draw other businesses to Tennessee with high-paying jobs, the governor said. [LINK](#)

**Tennessee gov signs bill to nix 1 court death penalty review** (AP) Tennessee is removing one state court’s review before executing inmates under legislation signed by Republican Gov. Bill Lee. With Lee’s approval Tuesday, Tennessee in July will begin skipping the state Court of Criminal Appeals and provide automatic state Supreme Court death penalty reviews. Lee spokeswoman Laine Arnold has said the governor was deferring to the Legislature’s will on the legislation. Court of Criminal Appeals Judge John Everett Williams has said his court’s last four death penalty reviews took three to six months. Federal courts account for most of sometimes-three-decades in death penalty court reviews. [LINK](#)

**TDOT: Wear orange on Wednesday for work zone safety awareness** (WVLT-TV) Wednesday, April 10 is your chance to wear orange in support of road worker safety in Tennessee. TDOT announced the day as part of National Work Zone Awareness Week. TDOT is also displaying safety messages all week on its interstate signs. The Tennessee Department of Transportation is asking for your help keeping workers and yourself safe when you drive near ongoing road work. Warmer weather this spring means TDOT crews will be able to do more permanent pothole patching work, according to TDOT spokesman Mark Nagi. [LINK](#)

**10 statues of Smokey, the Vols’ favorite dog, are coming to UT-Knoxville campus** (News Sentinel) Visitors to the University of Tennessee-Knoxville will be seeing a lot more of their favorite dog, Smokey, on campus. The university will unveil 10 statues of the bluetick hound, one for each dog that has been the mascot. Statues will be placed around campus, everywhere from the UT Gardens to the Student Union Pedestrian Bridge. A map of all the statue locations is available on UT’s website. The statues will be officially unveiled on Saturday at 2:30 p.m. near the Pedestrian Bridge by the Student Union Plaza, before the annual Orange and White Game. [LINK](#)

**ETSU faculty, students to rally in support of adjunct professor raises** (WCYB-TV) A rally will be held Wednesday on the campus of East Tennessee State University in support of raises for adjunct professors. The base salary for adjunct professors at ETSU is around \$600 per credit hour, depending on college, which has been unchanged since 1998. As of fall 2018, 425 adjunct professors were teaching at ETSU with a median salary of \$700 per credit hour. The rally will be held in Borchuck Plaza from 3-4 p.m. on Wednesday. ETSU’s Student Government Association passed a bill calling for adjunct professor base pay to be raised to \$1,000 per credit hour. The push is led by Austin Cable. [LINK](#)

**Crime Victims Week memorial service (WDEF-TV)** The state of Tennessee is observing Crime Victims Week, and Chattanooga's event was this morning at Chester Frost Park. Local officers joined in the observance. The Tennessee Board of Parole, along with the TBI and others, are co-sponsoring the series of meetings. Our own Chip Chapman was the M-C of the event. The purpose of the event was to pay tribute to victims of crime with a tree-planting ceremony at Chester Frost Park. [LINK](#)

**Daycare Director responds to state report accusing her employees of tying up children(WKRN-TV)** The director of a Murfreesboro daycare says she has nothing to hide after a scathing report was released by the state. According to the Department of Human resources, two of her employees at Salem Academy were caught on camera tying children to chairs. Documents provided by the Department of Human Services (DHS) showed that their employees visited Salem Academy unannounced nearly two weeks ago. They came to investigate a complaint that two employees were tying children to chairs. [LINK](#)

**Nearly 500 speeding tickets issued on I-440 during first month of construction (WSMV-TV)** The Metro Nashville Police Department is warning drivers that they're on the lookout for speeders on I-440. In just the first month of construction, 466 speeding tickets were issued. There are dozens of signs posted along the interstate to remind drivers that the speed limit is 45 MPH at all times, even if workers are not present. The entire stretch of interstate is considered at work zone during the duration of the project. [LINK](#)

**Belmont student diagnosed with mumps; leaders advising students take precautionary measures (WSMV-TV)** A Belmont University student was diagnosed Tuesday morning with mumps, according to a letter sent to students from the university obtained by News4. According to the university, the student was immediately isolated at home off-campus. It is unclear if any other students have been infected. "In the meantime, everyone at the University should take precautionary steps. This means frequent hand washing, avoiding unnecessary physical contact and not sharing eating utensils or food with other students. [LINK](#)

**Coli outbreak confirmed in Tennessee and four other states (WTVF-TV)** An E. coli outbreak is right here in Tennessee that's also affecting four nearby states. One of the state's top medical professionals says they're still trying to determine the source. Currently, there are 96 cases in Tennessee, Georgia, Kentucky, Ohio and Virginia. E. coli is a bacteria, a fecal-oral contaminate. The kind that causes diarrhea is typically due to contaminated water, produce that wasn't washed thoroughly, under cooked beef or someone preparing food who didn't wash their hands. [LINK](#)

**Friend hopes community comes to support Cyrus Wilson during parole hearing (WTVF-TV)** In February 1994, a 19-year-old Cyrus Wilson was convicted for the fatal shooting of Christopher Luckett, age 19. The shooting occurred in the 1400 block of 11th Avenue South in the Edgehill community during a late September night in 1992. During the time of the trial, two alleged eyewitnesses told prosecutors they saw the shooting but nearly two decades later the same witnesses have recanted their statements. Rahim Buford, a friend of Wilson, said without DNA or physical evidence, no gun and recanted statements, Wilson, now 43, has maintained his innocence throughout his time spent at Riverbend Maximum Security. [LINK](#)

**Bill would create faith-based office in Lee's administration (AP)** Republican Gov. Bill Lee's administration would include a faith-based and community initiatives division under a proposal making its way through the Tennessee General Assembly. According to the bill, the office would partner with a nonprofit to carry out the bulk of the work on addressing public safety, recidivism and opioid addiction. The governor would select members of the board and the executive director of the nonprofit partner. However, no state tax dollars are budgeted for the new office. Instead, the nonprofit would also be tasked with soliciting private donations from the public. [LINK](#)

**TN senators to debate Wednesday on governor's education savings accounts plan (WMC-TV)** Wednesday is a big day in the state senate for the controversial school choice plan. Senators will begin the debate the finance ways and means subcommittee about spending millions to fund education savings accounts similar to school vouchers. The Tennessee legislature could give families state money to attend the school of their choice. Some educators gathered at the capitol to send a clear message that it's not worth it. On Tuesday, teachers rallied in

Nashville, saying Governor Bill Lee's \$125 million school choice plan is bad for public education, taking money out of public schools and diverting it to private institutions. [LINK](#)

**Gov. Lee's ESA voucher plan faces key votes Wednesday** (WKRN-TV) Governor Bill Lee's controversial Educational Savings Account (ESA) or voucher proposal affecting thousands of students faces key votes Wednesday. Both the Tennessee House and Senate have the ESA bill scheduled to be heard in one of their committees. With the votes in those committees looming Wednesday, a group that identified itself as "Tennessee Strong" protested against the ESA bill outside the Cordell Hull legislative office building. "I am sick about money from public education going to private entities," said Rosa Ponce' who identified herself as a school parent from Montgomery County. "Ultimately, I think its underfunding of education that affects everything." [LINK](#)

**What's in the Senate version of the voucher bill?** (TN Journal) The Senate version of Gov. Bill Lee's school voucher proposal would double the number of students who could participate in the Education Savings Account program to 30,000. The measure scheduled to be heard in the Senate Education Committee on Wednesday would also dial back the testing requirements for students going to private school. Instead of requiring the same TCAP test for math and English (but not science or social studies) that is administered to public school students, private schools could give their students a "nationally norm-referenced test" approved by the state Education Department. [LINK](#)

**Tennessee voucher program would double in size, add homeschoolers under latest proposal** (Chalkbeat Tennessee) Gov. Bill Lee's education savings account proposal is slated to debut in Tennessee's Senate on Wednesday with some significant changes from a bill that already has cleared three hurdles in the House. The latest amendment would cap the voucher program at 30,000 students instead of 15,000 as approved by House committees. It would add back homeschoolers who were stripped out of the House bill last month to appease several representatives. Like other participants, those families would be eligible to receive an average of \$7,300 annually in taxpayer funds to pay for private education services. [LINK](#)

**Changes likely for Senate's education savings account bill** (Tennessean) Changes are headed to the Senate version of a bill that would launch education savings accounts in Tennessee. Sen. Dolores Gresham, chairman of the Senate Education Committee, said there hasn't been consensus yet in the Senate on its version of the education savings account legislation. The measure would provide taxpayer money to parents so they could choose other educational options, such as private school or other education-related expenses. "We have lots of ideas," said Gresham, R-Somerville, adding that the Senate as a whole agrees on bringing the program to the state. [LINK](#)

**Teachers protest against Tennessee voucher bill** (AP) Tennessee school teachers rallied on Capitol Hill against Gov. Bill Lee's voucher-style proposal to expand the amount of taxpayer dollars that can be used to pay for private schools and other expenses. Roughly 50 teachers, parents and other education advocates participated in a demonstration Tuesday, where they voiced concerns about Lee's of education savings account plan. Many of the teachers wore sunglasses to show that they feared retribution if identified in the small crowd. [LINK](#)

**Here's a look at the latest crop of specialty license plates** (TN Journal) Tennessee has more than 100 specialty license plates available to vehicle owners. Under a bill headed for the Senate floor, the state would get 22 more. Here's the list of proposed new plates advanced by the Senate Finance Committee on Tuesday: Antique Auto. Blood Donors. Fighting for At-Risk Youth ... The bill would also extend July 1, 2020, the time-frame for the new specialty earmarked license plate for Martin Luther King Jr. and the Niswonger Children's Hospital to meet the issuance requirement of 1,000 plates. [LINK](#)

**Legislation aims to prevent lawsuits against online commenters, others exercising free speech rights** (Tennessean) A Sumner County mom posted on Facebook in 2016, criticizing a local schools issues opponent who made a comment about her minor daughter. The man sued her for defamation, and lost. Advocates for a bill that passed the Tennessee General Assembly on Monday say the mom's case is a clear example of a lawsuit meant to stifle free speech. The new legislation would change who is financially liable for such cases, and give judges the power to dismiss them quickly. [LINK](#)

### **Bill requiring attorney general to defend school districts' bathroom policies advances**(Tennessean)

Legislation that would require the state attorney general to defend school districts' policies on bathroom use based on biological sex has advanced in a House committee. House Bill 1274, sponsored by Rep. Andy Holt, R-Dresden, was approved by a voice vote Tuesday in the House Judiciary committee and moves on to the Finance, Way and Means committee. Before passing on a voice vote, the legislation received pushback from multiple Republicans on the committee, including Rep. Johnny Garrett, R-Goodlettsville, who questioned whether the bill allowed the attorney general any discretion to refuse to defend school district's policy that was particularly egregious. [LINK](#)

**Tennessee 'Fetal Heartbeat Bill' Likely Not Moving Forward Amid Concerns In Senate** (WPLN Radio) The so-called "fetal heartbeat bill" is likely to not move forward this year in the Tennessee legislature. The Senate Judiciary Committee decided Tuesday evening to send the bill (SB1236/HB77) to summer study. The measure would ban abortions once a fetal heartbeat has been detected. Experts say that happens around the sixth week of the pregnancy. Republican Sen. Mike Bell, the chairman of the committee, says he is concerned about what would happen if the measure is challenged with a lawsuit. [LINK](#)

**Senate sends fetal heartbeat bill to summer study, advances abortion trigger ban** (Tennessean) Amid ongoing disagreements among Republicans and anti-abortion advocates over new restriction bills, a Senate committee on Tuesday opted to send legislation that prohibits abortions after a fetal heartbeat is detected to summer study. The heartbeat bill, which passed in the House last month before Republicans on a health subcommittee killed the House version of an abortion trigger ban bill, has been the subject of criticism by Lt. Gov. Randy McNally, R-Oak Ridge. McNally, who presides over the Senate, previously said the heartbeat bill banning abortions around six weeks would likely put Tennessee on the "losing side" of a court battle, and that he intended to see the trigger ban pass in the Senate. [LINK](#)

**Fetal heartbeat bill stalls in Tennessee Senate committee** (AP) Legislation banning abortion once a fetal heartbeat is detected has stalled in Tennessee. The Senate Judiciary Committee on Tuesday agreed to review the issue further over the summer and take it up next year instead. The decision came after the same panel advanced a separate anti-abortion bill that would ensure most abortions would be outlawed should the U.S. Supreme Court overturn the landmark Roe v. Wade decision. The two proposals have split Tennessee's GOP-dominant General Assembly this year as Republican lawmakers have fought to find ways to undermine abortion rights but have disagreed on the best proposal to submit to Gov. Bill Lee's desk. [LINK](#)

**'Heartbeat bill' sent to summer study** (TN Journal) The Senate Judiciary Committee has decided to punt on a bill seeking to ban abortions in Tennessee once a fetal heartbeat is detected. The House passed the measure in a floor vote, but the Senate decided not to proceed over concerns about a successful legal challenge. Here's what Senate Speaker Randy McNally (R-Oak Ridge) had to say after the committee action on Wednesday: "I fully support the deliberative approach the Judiciary Committee is taking on the Heartbeat Bill. As someone who believes life begins at conception, I support the bill philosophically. But constitutionally, as Tennessee Right to Life points out, the bill is flawed in its current form. Amendment One put the abortion industry on the ropes in Tennessee. [LINK](#)

**Sports betting bill clears House committee** (Nashville Post) A bill that would legalize online sports betting in Tennessee cleared a House committee Tuesday after weeks of delays and debate. The proposal was amended multiple times during the process, including to exclude brick-and-mortar gambling and to include recommendations from the University of Tennessee and Vanderbilt University, which were concerned over the bill's potential effects on college sports. As amended, the bill would direct tax revenue from legalized gaming, estimated to be several million dollars per year, to local governments (15 percent), gambling addiction treatment (5 percent) and the state lottery fund (80 percent). [LINK](#)

**Sports betting bill advances in Tennessee House, with money set aside for gambling addiction** (Tennessean) A bill to allow legal online sports gambling in Tennessee is advancing in the House of Representatives after briefly stalling amid bipartisan concerns. The legislation, House Bill 1, sponsored by Rep. Rick Staples, D-Knoxville, and the Senate version by Sen. Steve Dickerson, R-Nashville, advanced Tuesday in the House State

committee on a 12-5 vote, with one member not voting. While the original version of the bill allowed for gambling at both brick-and-mortar locations and online, it was previously amended to only permit online sports gambling on websites while users are located in the state of Tennessee. [LINK](#)

**Conservative immigration legislation passes House this time** (Nashville Post) A bill that would require Tennessee companies with 25 or more employees to use the federal E-Verify immigration and employment status check passed in the state House Monday night. Currently, businesses with 50 or more employees must use the program, which critics of the bill called costly and burdensome, particularly for smaller businesses. The sponsor, Rep. Bruce Griffey (R-Paris), said the goal of the bill was to “try to protect jobs for Tennessee workers.” Griffey, in his first term in the House, introduced several immigration-related bills, though they faced enough opposition from Griffey’s fellow Republicans to sink them. [LINK](#)

**Tennessee bill to expand immigration job screening advances** (AP) A bill that would require more Tennessee small businesses to use the E-Verify program to screen whether workers have legal immigration status to work in the U.S. has passed the state House. The House passed Republican Rep. Bruce Griffey’s bill Monday. It still needs to pass multiple Senate hurdles. The legislation would decrease the number of employees that a business must have from 50 to 25 to face the E-Verify requirement. It also would extend the mandate to governmental entities. The changes would take effect for new hires starting in January 2020. [LINK](#)

**New bill targeting conflicts of interest between hospitals, governing authorities could reshuffle Erlanger board** (Times Free Press) A bill targeting conflicts of interest between Tennessee’s public hospitals and their governing bodies could upend the structure of Erlanger Health System’s Board of Trustees, should it become law. Senate Bill 179 and House Bill 416 would prohibit a trustee or former trustee of a hospital authority from entering into an arrangement for employment or the provision of labor or services with the authority until at least 12 months have expired following the trustee’s tenure of service on the board. [LINK](#)

**Legislative battle pits homeowners’ associations against absentee corporations** (Nashville Post) ‘This isn’t Mom and Pop. This is Wall Street coming in here with billions of dollars. ‘Question: We all believe that property owners have the right of disposition regarding their property, correct? The default answer to that is an obvious, “Yes.” And parties to a legal covenant have the right to expect that they — and others bound to it — will conduct themselves in accordance with it, correct? Another yes. So far, so good. The hair-splitting comes when disputants to a property matter each claim the white horse and the good guy’s role, and each further appropriates the role of Everyman seeking to be free of undue exploitation and/or control. [LINK](#)

**East Tennessee families push for ‘Truth In Sentencing’ bill** (WATE-TV) This week is one where families pause, thinking about loved ones they’ve lost to violence. The purpose of National Crime Victims’ Rights Week is to remember victims of crime, their families and those who helped them through it. The other part of this is where loved ones call for change. A number of East Tennessee families want more rights. They hope lawmakers pass the Truth In Sentencing bill. Richard Sommerville is close to his daughter’s heart every day. “My dad was my everything and it hurts. He’s gone and we can’t get him back,” said Sally Sommerville. [LINK](#)

**Hair Braiding Freedom Act headed to Tennessee Governor’s desk** (WATN-TV) A proposal to loosen state regulations surrounding African-style hair braiding is headed to the Tennessee governor’s desk for his signature. The Hair Braiding Freedom Act repeals the 300-hours of training and state fee required for a hair braiding license. Braiders will still have register with the state and take 16 hours of training in sanitation and hygiene. One woman says she has been waiting for this change for a long time. “I love what I do, and I just want to braid hair,” said Debra Nutall. [LINK](#)

**Dickerson’s campaign accepted money from kickback scheme slush fund** (Nashville Post) State Sen. Steve Dickerson testified in federal court recently that he had no knowledge of the shell company John Davis, the former CEO of Comprehensive Pain Specialists — a company Dickerson co-founded — used as a funnel for kickback money — even though his election campaign accepted money from it. ProMed, the company through which Davis ushered more than \$770,000 of bribes in his wife’s name while working as the top executive at CPS, was one of 12 businesses from which Dickerson accepted donations in his 2012 senate campaign. Overall, Dickerson’s campaign received 522 donations that year. [LINK](#)

**Grand Divisions Episode 47: Democratic lawmaker accused of sexual harassment (Tennessean)** A Democratic lawmaker has been accused of sexual harassment, but it remains to be seen exactly what type of action will be taken as a result. Rep. Rick Staples, D-Knoxville, has been accused of inappropriately touching a woman while on a recent visit to the legislature. While Staples is reportedly facing disciplinary action following an internal investigation that determined he violated the legislature's sexual harassment policy, according to multiple sources who spoke to USA TODAY NETWORK – Tennessee about the inquiry, legislative officials have yet to publicly confirm specifics. [LINK](#)

**Some voter registration groups could get hit with \$10,000 in civil penalties, up to a year in jail for submitting incomplete, problematic forms (Times Free Press)** A Tennessee Senate panel on Tuesday advanced a bill that could subject some large groups involved in voter registration efforts to civil and possibly even criminal charges as well as fines if they submit too many incomplete or incorrect registrations. The GOP-led Senate Judiciary Committee approved the bill on a 7-2 vote, despite concerns raised by the League of Women Voters. Sen. Todd Gardenhire, R-Chattanooga, voted for the bill. [LINK](#)

**Nashville government lobbyists also support pro-voucher group, councilman calls it 'ridiculous' (Tennessean)** Nashville's lobbying firm is coming under fire from the Metro Council because it also advocates for school vouchers — an issue one councilman says puts the lobbyists at odds with the city's interests. According to state records, Adams & Reese managing partner Gif Thornton and three other firm employees are registered to represent both Nashville city government and a prominent pro-voucher group TennesseeCAN, once known as StudentsFirst Tennessee. Councilman Dave Rosenberg said the city hamstrung itself by hiring lobbyists that can't represent the city's opposition to vouchers, particularly because the issue has dominated the legislative session this year. [LINK](#)

**Roe will headline energy conference (WCYB-TV)** Congressman Phil Roe will headline the 40th annual conference of the Virginia Coal & Energy Alliance. The conference is set May 20-21 at the Meadowview Conference Center in Kingsport. Roe is a Republican from Johnson City and is serving his sixth term in Congress. He is a ranking member of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs and he chaired the committee in the 115th Congress. Additionally, he serves on the House Education and Labor Committee. Previously, he was a member of the Joint Select Committee on Solvency of Multiemployer Pension Plans. [LINK](#)

**Annoyed by \$84,000 Bob Dylan sculpture, Rep. Tim Burchett targets embassy art (News Sentinel)** During the longest government shutdown in the nation's history earlier this year, the U.S. State Department made a purchase that caught the eye of news publications and U.S. Rep. Tim Burchett. Burchett, a Republican freshman representing the Second Congressional District in Tennessee, has since crafted legislation that, if approved, would prohibit it from happening again. As part of the department's Art in Embassies program, officials cut a check for \$84,375 for an iron sculpture created by singer-songwriter Bob Dylan. The art will sit in the soon-to-be-completed U.S. Embassy in Mozambique that, according to the State Department, will cost \$253 million. It is set to be completed this year. [LINK](#)

**Chattanooga Volkswagen workers file petition to join United Auto Workers so they can bargain like other VW employees (Times Free Press)** For the third time in about five years, some Volkswagen plant workers in Chattanooga are seeking an election to align with the United Auto Workers. "It's pressure from the workers," said Steve Cochran, president of UAW Local 42 in Chattanooga, about why the election petition was filed Tuesday with the National Labor Relations Board. The petition said that at least 30 percent of the 1,709 production, skilled trades and other employees making up the proposed election unit have turned over cards seeking representation by the UAW. [LINK](#)

**UAW making new push at VW Chattanooga (Commercial Appeal)** Five years after Tennessee political leaders resisted UAW efforts to unionize Volkswagen Chattanooga, plant workers have called for another union election. The United Auto Workers union lost its 2014 bid to represent autoworkers in the East Tennessee plant. This time, autoworkers sense a union-friendly White House, a new governor in Nashville and a rising desire on the plant floor for a voice in VW Chattanooga. "This was a decision made by the Chattanooga

workers,” said Brian Rothenberg, spokesman for the Detroit-based union. “The members have taken it into their own hands.” [LINK](#)

**Ed Westcott, a Singular Eye at the Dawn of the Atomic Age, Dies at 97** (New York Times) Ed Westcott, a photographer who documented life in Oak Ridge, Tenn., the secret city where uranium was enriched as part of the Manhattan Project to develop the atom bomb during World War II, died on March 29 at his daughter’s home in Oak Ridge, where he also still lived. He was 97. His daughter, Emily Hunnicutt, confirmed his death. Mr. Westcott had a stroke in 2005 that limited his ability to speak. Not then on any maps, Oak Ridge during the war was a huge company town of 59,000 acres about 25 miles east of Knoxville. Ringed by barbed wire, it had factories dedicated to bomb production, homes for tens of thousands of workers and their families, a 300-mile network of roads, and schools, stores, restaurants, theaters, parks and a library. [LINK](#)

#### **OPINION**

**Guest column: Grammar, syntax and punctuation still matter** (Tennessean) Smartphones, tablets, computers and televisions have eroded the influence of print newspapers, and texting has rendered punctuation, grammar and complete sentences as relevant as Edgar Bergen. However, many of us believe that grammar, syntax and punctuation still matter. Knowing the difference between “your” and “you’re” and among “they’re,” “their” and “there” is not enough, despite Twitter posts that flout these distinctions. Well-schooled readers likely spotted the lesson embedded in the last sentence: “Between” distinguishes one item from a second item; “among” distinguishes among three or more items. [LINK](#)

**Guest column: The Tennessee Education Savings Account bill fails the math test** (Tennessean) Gov. Bill Lee has proposed legislation that would create a \$125 million a year voucher entitlement program. Governor Lee says his \$7,300 per child Education Savings Account (ESA) bill would help Tennessee’s poorest children in our worst-performing schools. We applaud the governor’s emphasis on education, and we believe in his good intentions. But unfortunately, others have drafted a bill that would let millionaires and even billionaires qualify for this voucher entitlement, while the poorest children are left behind. The voucher math doesn’t add up. The \$7,300 voucher would leave poor kids far short on cash for quality private schools’ tuition and fees, which can be two or three or even four times as much. [LINK](#)

## Erin Merrick

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**From:** News Clips  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 9, 2019 9:44 AM  
**To:** AE-Governors\_Staff  
**Subject:** News Alert: Times Free Press "Volkswagen workers file petition to join United Auto Workers so they can bargain like other VW employees"

**Read [here](#)**

### **Volkswagen workers file petition to join United Auto Workers so they can bargain like other VW employees**

April 9th, 2019 by Mike Pare in Breaking News

A group of Volkswagen's workers in Chattanooga today filed a petition with the National Labor Relations Board for an election to join the United Auto Workers, saying they want the right to bargain like other VW employees worldwide.

The petition seeks an election for all production and maintenance workers in Chattanooga on April 29 and 30.

It would be the second such election at the plant. In 2014, the union lost a vote of the plant's workers by a margin of 712 to 626.

But in 2015, the plant's maintenance, or skilled trades workers, voted 108-44 to align with the UAW.

Steve Cochran, president of UAW Local 42 in Chattanooga, on Tuesday asked in a statement why Chattanooga workers are treated differently than other VW employees worldwide.

"Why are Chattanooga workers treated differently than even other auto assembly workers at plants like GM Spring Hill?" he asked.

Annette Stallion, a Chattanooga production worker on the day shift, said it's time for a new vote.

"Our maintenance workers voted to form a union and VW still refused to bargain. They said they would bargain if production and maintenance workers voted - so let's vote," she said.

Ashley Murray a Chattanooga production worker on the night shift, too asked why Chattanooga workers "are treated differently."

"Why in Chattanooga do we have to make suggestions, not sit down and bargain like every other VW plant?" she asked

Cochran said an election is about Chattanooga's VW workforce.

"This isn't about politicians. It's not about outsiders. It's about Chattanooga workers," Cochran added. "We deserve the same rights as Spring Hill workers and every other VW worker in the world."



While the maintenance workers at the plant earlier agreed to align with the UAW, Volkswagen has said it won't bargain with the micro-union because it wants all its blue-collar workers to vote on organizing the Chattanooga factory. That case is currently before the NLRB.

**From:** Horace Tipton  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 6, 2019 3:27 PM  
**Subject:** News Alert: Commercial Appeal "GM Spring Hill profit-sharing payout for UAW workers nears \$11,000"

**[Read Here](#)**

**GM Spring Hill profit-sharing payout for UAW workers nears \$11,000**

**Ted Evanoff, Memphis Commercial Appeal**Published 10:19 a.m. CT Feb. 6, 2019 | **Updated 2:56 p.m. CT Feb. 6, 2019**

*Supported by strong demand in the United States for new pickups and crossovers loaded with high-end options, GM's North American operations produced \$10.8 billion in earnings before taxes.*

Profit-sharing checks for GM workers will pump millions of dollars of payroll into the Nashville-area economy this winter.

General Motors will send out \$500 million worth of profit-sharing checks across the country late this month. That works out to bonus of up to \$10,750 for each eligible employee represented by the United Auto Workers union.

GM's Spring Hill production complex near Nashville employs about 5,000 people, including about 3,500 hourly workers represented by UAW Local 1853. About 200 are temporary workers ineligible for the payout.

General Motors disclosed the profit-sharing amount Wednesday and reported after-tax corporate profits totaled \$8.1 billion last year on worldwide sales.

Supported by strong demand in the United States for new pickups and crossovers loaded with high-end options, the automaker's North American operations produced \$10.8 billion in earnings before taxes.

**Payouts down from last year, but still 'well-received'**

North American profits determine the size of the profit-sharing checks for the Detroit-based company's 46,500 workers in the United States represented by the UAW. The profit-sharing payout is down from last year's \$11,500.

Eligible employees are scheduled to receive the payout in their Feb. 22 paycheck. Employees working 1,850 hours receive the full profit-sharing payout. It is on top of regular wages and benefits.

GM officials say eligible workers employed since 2010 by the company have received profit-sharing checks that add up to more than \$80,500 in additional income. That works out to about \$8,400 per year on top of traditional hourly wages exceeding \$60,000 per year.

GM also said 132 employees from Lordstown, Ohio, have transferred to Spring Hill. GM is closing the Lordstown car plant and ramping up output at Spring Hill, home of a trio of sport-utility vehicles. The Cadillac XT6 is being added to the assembly line now, joining the Cadillac XT5 and GMC Acadia.

"The profit sharing was very well-received" by workers in the plant, said Mike Herron, UAW Local 1853 chairman at Spring Hill.

### **GM's 2018 profits outpace analyst expectations**

Last year proved more profitable for GM than the year before. In 2017, the company reported a \$3.9 billion loss after taking a tax accounting charge.

In 2018, profits totaled \$5.58 for each share of outstanding stock. Taking into account special items for restructuring, profits equaled \$6.54 per share, surpassing the \$6.29 performance expected by Wall Street analysts.

A GM press release reporting the results carried a statement from Mary Barra, the GM chairman of the board, saying: "When GM delivers good business results, our eligible hourly employees in the U.S. share in the company's success. To build on our performance, we must continue working together to deliver strong safety, quality and productivity results."

Under the four-year labor contract negotiated in 2015, General Motors paid UAW members with less than one year of experience \$17 per hour and provided provisions for pay to ratchet up by 2022 to \$29 per hour, the regular wage then for what are called traditional workers.

The contract calls for a 3-percent wage increase for traditional workers in year one, a 4- percent lump sum raise in year two, a 3-percent wage increase in year three and a 4- percent lump sum raise the final year.

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## Jessica Bader

---

**From:** Geanacopoulos, David <David.Geanacopoulos@vw.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 18, 2019 9:21 AM  
**To:** Jessica Bader  
**Subject:** RE: VW, UAW

I sent him a text asking for call.

-----Original Message-----

From: Geanacopoulos, David  
Sent: Thursday, April 18, 2019 10:21 AM  
To: 'Jessica Bader' <Jessica.Bader@tn.gov>  
Subject: RE: VW, UAW

Hi Jessica, never mind! I found Blake's #. Thanks again and best wishes.  
David G

-----Original Message-----

From: Geanacopoulos, David  
Sent: Thursday, April 18, 2019 9:38 AM  
To: 'Jessica Bader' <Jessica.Bader@tn.gov>  
Subject: RE: VW, UAW

Hi Jessica,

Thanks for your help Tuesday! I've misplaced Blake's cell phone number that he gave me. I'd like to speak with him today if possible. Can you get me on the phone with Blake? I have a short update on our discussion of Tuesday.

Thanks and best regards,

David G

202-899-1002  
703-201-2920

-----Original Message-----

From: Jessica Bader [mailto:Jessica.Bader@tn.gov]  
Sent: Monday, April 15, 2019 12:41 PM  
To: Geanacopoulos, David <David.Geanacopoulos@vw.com>  
Subject: RE: VW, UAW

David,

Construction is cleared and you'll have no problem accessing the Capitol through that tunnel. Please let me know if you need anything else.

Thanks!  
Jessica

-----Original Message-----

From: Geanacopoulos, David <David.Geanacopoulos@vw.com>  
Sent: Monday, April 15, 2019 11:26 AM  
To: Jessica Bader <Jessica.Bader@tn.gov>  
Subject: RE: VW, UAW

Jessica, which entrance should I use? I think there was construction going on the last time, and I could not easily get to your office via the tunnel from MLK Blvd.

Thanks again.

David

-----Original Message-----

From: Jessica Bader [mailto:Jessica.Bader@tn.gov]  
Sent: Monday, April 15, 2019 12:22 PM  
To: Geanacopoulos, David <David.Geanacopoulos@vw.com>  
Subject: RE: VW, UAW

Hi David,

Blake's office is located on the First Floor of the Capitol in the Governor's Suite. Will you need parking here at the Capitol for your meeting?

Thanks!

Jessica

-----Original Message-----

From: Blake Harris  
Sent: Monday, April 15, 2019 11:01 AM  
To: Geanacopoulos, David <David.Geanacopoulos@vw.com>  
Cc: Jessica Bader <Jessica.Bader@tn.gov>  
Subject: Re: VW, UAW

Yes that works.

Sent from my iPhone

> On Apr 15, 2019, at 10:55 AM, Geanacopoulos, David <David.Geanacopoulos@vw.com> wrote:

>

> Hi Blake,

> I am coming to Nashville tonight. I can come to your office at 11:00 tomorrow. That still work? Are you I the same Capitol location where the Gov is?

> Thanks and best regards,

> David

>

> -----Original Message-----

> From: Blake Harris [mailto:Blake.Harris@tn.gov]

> Sent: Saturday, April 13, 2019 9:26 AM

> To: Geanacopoulos, David <David.Geanacopoulos@vw.com>; Jessica Bader <Jessica.Bader@tn.gov>

> Subject: Re: VW, UAW

>

> Thanks David. I'd like that. I'm flexible between 11a and 3p. Let me know what works and Jessica will schedule it and help you arrange parking if needed.

>  
> Sent from my iPhone  
>  
>> On Apr 12, 2019, at 2:47 PM, Geanacopoulos, David <David.Geanacopoulos@vw.com> wrote:  
>>  
>> Dear Blake:  
>> I'd like to come in next week and brief you on how we are handling the recently announced UAW petition for a plant wide election at our factory. I am planning to be in Nashville on Tuesday. Could you make some time to see me then?  
>> Thanks and best regards,  
>> David Geanacopoulos  
>> (VW Government Relations, DC)  
>> 703-201-2920  
>>  
>> Sent from my iPhone

## **Liz Ashwood**

---

**From:** Tony Niknejad  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 9, 2019 8:35 PM  
**To:** Liz Ashwood  
**Subject:** UAW and unions

Remind me to talk to you about project on that tomorrow

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Chris Walker](#)  
**To:** [Laine Arnold](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: VW union election petition  
**Date:** Tuesday, April 9, 2019 4:35:31 PM

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** "Opfer, Christopher" <[copfer@bloomberglaw.com](mailto:copfer@bloomberglaw.com)>  
**Date:** April 9, 2019 at 4:33:53 PM CDT  
**To:** "[chris.walker@tn.gov](mailto:chris.walker@tn.gov)" <[chris.walker@tn.gov](mailto:chris.walker@tn.gov)>  
**Subject:** VW union election petition

Hi Chris. I cover labor for Bloomberg Law. I'm working on a story about the UAW filing a new union election petition for the Chattanooga plant. Hoping to get a comment on how Gov. Lee feels about it, given the previous opposition from Haslam. Any help is much appreciated.

Thanks.

[illegible]

## Chris Opfer

Deputy Team Leader, Labor &amp; Employment

**Bloomberg Law**

Desk: 646.324.2059  
Cell: 571.236.4850  
[copfer@bloomberglaw.com](mailto:copfer@bloomberglaw.com)



## Erin Merrick

---

**From:** Garnett Decosimo  
**Sent:** Monday, April 22, 2019 3:40 PM  
**To:** Erin Merrick  
**Subject:** FW: Following-Up/Meeting

Email to Todd Womack requesting a meeting on UAW. Call was rescheduled for the 24<sup>th</sup>.

Thanks,

---

**From:** Presley Nixon <[presley@BridgePublicAffairs.com](mailto:presley@BridgePublicAffairs.com)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 11, 2019 10:34 AM  
**To:** Garnett Decosimo <[Garnett.Decosimo@tn.gov](mailto:Garnett.Decosimo@tn.gov)>  
**Subject:** RE: Following-Up/Meeting

There was a glitch in the first invite I sent so I just sent out a second one. This invite includes Tony's email as well.

Thanks!!

---

**From:** Garnett Decosimo <[Garnett.Decosimo@tn.gov](mailto:Garnett.Decosimo@tn.gov)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 11, 2019 10:46 AM  
**To:** Presley Nixon <[presley@BridgePublicAffairs.com](mailto:presley@BridgePublicAffairs.com)>  
**Subject:** RE: Following-Up/Meeting

Okay, let's do 330 EST.

Thanks!

Garnett T. Decosimo  
Senior Policy Analyst  
Tennessee State Government, Office of the Governor  
c. 615.961.0680 o. 615.734.8360

---

**From:** Presley Nixon <[presley@BridgePublicAffairs.com](mailto:presley@BridgePublicAffairs.com)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 11, 2019 9:37 AM  
**To:** Garnett Decosimo <[Garnett.Decosimo@tn.gov](mailto:Garnett.Decosimo@tn.gov)>  
**Subject:** RE: Following-Up/Meeting

Sorry! EST

---

**From:** Garnett Decosimo <[Garnett.Decosimo@tn.gov](mailto:Garnett.Decosimo@tn.gov)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 11, 2019 10:36:27 AM  
**To:** Presley Nixon  
**Subject:** RE: Following-Up/Meeting

Sorry, is that EST or CST?

Garnett T. Decosimo  
Senior Policy Analyst  
Tennessee State Government, Office of the Governor  
c. 615.961.0680 o. 615.734.8360

---

**From:** Presley Nixon <[presley@BridgePublicAffairs.com](mailto:presley@BridgePublicAffairs.com)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 11, 2019 8:45 AM  
**To:** Garnett Decosimo <[Garnett.Decosimo@tn.gov](mailto:Garnett.Decosimo@tn.gov)>  
**Cc:** Todd Womack <[todd@BridgePublicAffairs.com](mailto:todd@BridgePublicAffairs.com)>; Micah Johnson <[micah@BridgePublicAffairs.com](mailto:micah@BridgePublicAffairs.com)>  
**Subject:** RE: Following-Up/Meeting

Todd and Micah are both available from 2:00-4:00pm on Friday. Let me know what is convenient for you and Tony and I will send around a call invite.

Thank you!  
Presley

---

**From:** Garnett Decosimo <[Garnett.Decosimo@tn.gov](mailto:Garnett.Decosimo@tn.gov)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 11, 2019 9:13 AM  
**To:** Presley Nixon <[presley@BridgePublicAffairs.com](mailto:presley@BridgePublicAffairs.com)>  
**Cc:** Todd Womack <[todd@BridgePublicAffairs.com](mailto:todd@BridgePublicAffairs.com)>; Micah Johnson <[micah@BridgePublicAffairs.com](mailto:micah@BridgePublicAffairs.com)>  
**Subject:** Re: Following-Up/Meeting

Thanks guys!

I'm available but need to confirm with Tony. Is there a specific block of time that works?

Sent from my iPhone

On Apr 10, 2019, at 16:31, Presley Nixon <[presley@bridgepublicaffairs.com](mailto:presley@bridgepublicaffairs.com)> wrote:

**\*\*\* This is an EXTERNAL email. Please exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email - STS-Security. \*\*\***

Hello, Garnett—

Are you free for a call on Friday afternoon?

Thanks!  
Presley

---

**From:** Todd Womack  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 10, 2019 5:07 PM  
**To:** Garnett Decosimo <[Garnett.Decosimo@tn.gov](mailto:Garnett.Decosimo@tn.gov)>  
**Cc:** Presley Nixon <[presley@BridgePublicAffairs.com](mailto:presley@BridgePublicAffairs.com)>; Micah Johnson <[micah@BridgePublicAffairs.com](mailto:micah@BridgePublicAffairs.com)>  
**Subject:** RE: Following-Up/Meeting

I'm actually back in Chattanooga but would be eager to get on a call. I did talk a little with Blake about it yesterday. Adding Presley to find a time.

---

**From:** Garnett Decosimo <[Garnett.Decosimo@tn.gov](mailto:Garnett.Decosimo@tn.gov)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 10, 2019 12:57 PM  
**To:** Todd Womack <[todd@BridgePublicAffairs.com](mailto:todd@BridgePublicAffairs.com)>  
**Subject:** Following-Up/Meeting

Hey Todd,

Great seeing you yesterday!

Are you planning to be around the Capitol later this week? Given your experience with previous UAW efforts to organize the VW plant in Chatt, Tony and I were hoping to take a few minute to get your thoughts on the petition filed yesterday.

If you're not planning to be in Nashville, we can set up a call as well. Just let me know.

Thanks,

<image001.png>

Garnett T. Decosimo | Senior Policy Analyst  
State Capitol, Ground Floor  
600 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd., Nashville, TN 37243  
[garnett.decosimo@tn.gov](mailto:garnett.decosimo@tn.gov)  
c. 615.961.0680 o. 615.734.8360

\_\_\_\_\_

**From:** Chris Walker  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 9, 2019 4:36 PM  
**To:** Opfer, Christopher  
**Cc:** Laine Arnold  
**Subject:** Re: VW union election petition

Desk: 646.324.2059  
Cell: 571.236.4850  
[copfer@bloomberglaw.com](mailto:copfer@bloomberglaw.com)

**From:** Chris Walker  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 9, 2019 4:35 PM  
**To:** Laine Arnold  
**Subject:** Fwd: VW union election petition

**From:** "Opfer, Christopher" <[copfer@bloomberglaw.com](mailto:copfer@bloomberglaw.com)>  
**Date:** April 9, 2019 at 4:33:53 PM CDT  
**To:** "[chris.walker@tn.gov](mailto:chris.walker@tn.gov)" <[chris.walker@tn.gov](mailto:chris.walker@tn.gov)>  
**Subject:** VW union election petition

Desk: 646.324.2059  
Cell: 571.236.4850  
[copfer@bloomberglaw.com](mailto:copfer@bloomberglaw.com)

## Blake Harris

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**From:** Blake Harris  
**Sent:** Monday, April 15, 2019 11:01 AM  
**To:** Geanacopoulos, David  
**Cc:** Jessica Bader  
**Subject:** Re: VW, UAW

Yes that works.  
Sent from my iPhone

> On Apr 15, 2019, at 10:55 AM, Geanacopoulos, David <David.Geanacopoulos@vw.com> wrote:

>

> Hi Blake,

> I am coming to Nashville tonight. I can come to your office at 11:00 tomorrow. That still work? Are you l the same Capitol location where the Gov is?

> Thanks and best regards,

> David

>

> -----Original Message-----

> From: Blake Harris [mailto:Blake.Harris@tn.gov]

> Sent: Saturday, April 13, 2019 9:26 AM

> To: Geanacopoulos, David <David.Geanacopoulos@vw.com>; Jessica Bader <Jessica.Bader@tn.gov>

> Subject: Re: VW, UAW

>

> Thanks David. I'd like that. I'm flexible between 11a and 3p. Let me know what works and Jessica will schedule it and help you arrange parking if needed.

>

> Sent from my iPhone

>

>> On Apr 12, 2019, at 2:47 PM, Geanacopoulos, David <David.Geanacopoulos@vw.com> wrote:

>>

>> Dear Blake:

>> I'd like to come in next week and brief you on how we are handling the recently announced UAW petition for a plant wide election at our factory. I am planning to be in Nashville on Tuesday. Could you make some time to see me then?

>> Thanks and best regards,

>> David Geanacopoulos

>> (VW Government Relations, DC)

>> 703-201-2920

>>

>> Sent from my iPhone

## **Erin Merrick**

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**From:** News Clips  
**Sent:** Monday, April 29, 2019 3:43 PM  
**To:** AE-Governors\_Staff  
**Subject:** News Alert: Chattanooga Times Free Press "Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee makes a visit to Chattanooga Volkswagen plant"

**Read [here](#)**

### **Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee makes a visit to Chattanooga Volkswagen plant April 29th, 2019 by Mike Pare**

Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee today visited the Volkswagen assembly plant in Chattanooga where he talked to employees and toured the factory's training academy.

But members of the news media weren't informed of the visit nor permitted into the plant or able to ask questions after Lee spent about an hour at the factory.

Amanda Plecas, the plant's head of communications, said the visit "was not union-related." She said Lee indicated today is the governor's 100th day in office.

"He said he wanted to be here on his 100th day and see the investment in the [Volkswagen] Academy," Plecas said.

Some VW workers earlier this month petitioned the National Labor Relations Board for an election to align with the United Auto Workers.

An NLRB hearing officer held a hearing in Chattanooga on April 17. Since that time, lawyers for Volkswagen filed a legal brief to strike down the request for the new union election at the plant, while a UAW attorney stepped up the case for a new vote.



**Erin Merrick**

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**From:** News Clips  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 1, 2019 7:22 AM  
**To:** AE-Governors\_Staff  
**Subject:** Daily News Clips - May 1

## Wednesday, May 1

MAY 1, 2019

**House, Senate reach deal and pass \$38.5 billion budget** (Tennessean) The 111th Tennessee General Assembly has now successfully completed its only requirement for the year: Passing a budget. The \$38.5 billion state budget, the first to be drafted by Gov. Bill Lee's office, underwent changes from both the House of Representatives and Senate before the two chambers ultimately agreed on a solution Tuesday. The House adopted amendments on Tuesday evening to conform to the 2019-2020 budget document that the Senate passed earlier that day — a version that included all of the House's requests. [LINK](#)

**Tennessee lawmakers pass \$38.5B spending plan** (AP) Tennessee lawmakers have signed off on a \$38.5 billion spending plan for the upcoming fiscal year, which includes funding for providing Medicaid assistance to disabled children, pay hikes for correctional officers and boosting the state's rainy day account. Lawmakers had been split on several key budget items, disagreeing over the best way to fund the \$27.3 million so-called Katie Beckett program among other differences. However, as of Tuesday, lawmakers had settled on a compromise and advanced the budget outline for fiscal year 2019-2020. [LINK](#)

**Legislature approves Tennessee's \$38.55 billion budget; measure heads to Gov. Bill Lee's desk** (Times Free Press) Tennessee's \$38.5 billion 2019-2020 budget is headed to Gov. Bill Lee's desk after the House and Senate gave final approval to the annual spending plan. Representatives voted 98-0 on the bill Tuesday night, while senators earlier in the day approved it 32-0. A series of last-minute snarls were resolved over the weekend and Monday between the two GOP-led chambers. For example, the Senate agreed with the House's stance to provide \$27 million in funding for the state to fund a proposed Katie Beckett federal Medicaid waiver. [LINK](#)

**Legislature reaches agreement for \$38.6 billion budget** (Daily Memphian) The state Legislature approved a \$38.6 billion budget for fiscal 2019-20 with a variety of tax cuts while adding \$220 million to bolster the rainy day fund and give teachers pay increases totaling \$71 million. The measure passed the Senate and House unanimously after both chambers reached a compromise for funding a Katie Beckett waiver, with \$27.3 million to add more than 3,000 of the state's most fragile children to TennCare rolls. Instead of using out-of-state online sales tax revenue, which is projected at \$44 million, the plan calls for using money from the general fund. [LINK](#)

**Gov. Lee's appearance is making tickets to the Carter County Lincoln Day Dinner a hot item.** (Johnson City Press) When he was running for governor, Bill Lee made a lot of stops in Carter County. Now that he is the governor, Lee appears to still like to stop in the Republican bastion. Lee will be the speaker at the Carter County Republican Party's 2019 Lincoln Day Dinner, which will take place on Thursday, May 16, with the program and dinner starting at 6:30 p.m. There will also be a reception for the governor at 5:30 p.m. for those who purchase special ticket to the reception. As is customary, the dinner will once again be held at Sutton Hall, 101 Neth Drive, on the campus of Milligan College, the site of nearly all the Carter County Lincoln Day Dinners in the past. [LINK](#)

**Western Express freight company to add 225 jobs in Tennessee** (Times Free Press) A Nashville-based freight company announced today it will spend \$88 million and add 225 jobs as it adds new technology, business services and back office support at its headquarters and expands its truck fleet nationwide. Western Express

Inc., which Donna and Wayne Wise founded in 1991, expects to top \$800 million in sales this year. In 2017, Transport Topics listed Western Express as the 58th biggest trucking firm in America with sales of \$566.2 million ... “The expansion of Western Express in Nashville is another sign of how Middle Tennessee is thriving and attracting top businesses and investment,” Gov. Bill Lee said in a statement today. [LINK](#)

**Gov. Bill Lee shies away from taking stance on controversial voter registration bill**(Tennessean) One day after lawmakers gave final approval to a controversial voter registration bill that critics have called for the state’s top executive to veto, Gov. Bill Lee shied away from suggesting he was considering rejecting the measure. Speaking to the USA TODAY Network – Tennessee after a Tuesday morning gathering of the legislative prayer caucus, Lee said he had yet to read the recently approved measure. On Monday, the House gave its final approval of HB 1079, which would make the Volunteer State the first in the nation to threaten voter registration efforts with civil penalties for incomplete forms. [LINK](#)

**Despite Misgivings, Gov. Bill Lee Plans To Allow Sports Gambling In Tennessee** (WPLN Radio) Tennessee likely will soon join the list of states that have legalized online sports gambling. The measure passed the state legislature Tuesday and is headed to the desk of Gov. Bill Lee, whose office says will let it become law despite his personal opposition to gambling. “The Governor has said he does not believe that the expansion of gambling is best, but he recognizes that many in the legislature found this to be an issue they want to explore further,” Laine Arnold, Lee’s spokeswoman, said in a text. “He plans to let this become law without signature.” [LINK](#)

**Online sports betting hits Legislature’s jackpot** (Daily Memphian) Legislation setting up an online gambling sports network in Tennessee passed the Senate on Tuesday, potentially bringing in \$50 million in wagering revenue annually, a measure that will become law without the governor’s signature. The Senate voted 19-12 – two more than the minimum 17 votes needed – to establish a nine-person gambling commission that would serve as an advisory panel to the Tennessee Lottery Corporation, which will regulate online, interactive and mobile gaming and oversee the licensing of gaming companies. [LINK](#)

**Lee to let online gambling bill become law without signature** (TN Journal) Republican Gov. Bill Lee plans to allow a bill to legalize online sports gambling in Tennessee to become law without his signature. The bill cleared the House on a 58-37 vote last week and the Senate on Thursday passed its own version 19-12. The lower chamber then concurred with Senate changes on a 51-40 vote, sending the bill to Lee’s desk. “The governor has said he does not believe that the expansion of gambling is best, but he recognizes that many in the legislature found this to be an issue they want to explore further,” said Lee spokeswoman Laine Arnold. [LINK](#)

**Gov. Bill Lee to allow Tennessee online sports betting bill to become law without his signature** (Times Free Press) Gov. Bill Lee plans to allow a just-passed Tennessee online sports betting measure become law without his signature, his spokeswoman said Tuesday. “The governor has said he does not believe that the expansion is best, but he recognizes that many in the legislature found this to be an issue they want to explore further,” Lee spokeswoman Laine Arnold said in a statement. “He plans to let this become law without his signature.” Earlier Tuesday, the House narrowly approved Senate amendments to the bill on a 51-40 vote. [LINK](#)

**Tennessee governor to allow sports betting to become law without signature** (Tennessean) Despite being opposed to the legalization of gambling, Gov. Bill Lee says he will allow a Tennessee sports betting bill to become law without his signature. After a vote of approval last week in the House of Representatives, the Senate on Tuesday passed legislation that would permit online sports gambling beginning July 1, while continuing to prohibit the practice at brick-and-mortar locations. Senate Bill 16 narrowly passed on a vote of 19 to 12, as it did in the House 58 to 37. Afterward, the House even more narrowly adopted some minor Senate amendments with 51 votes. [LINK](#)

**Lee spurned paperwork in building first Cabinet** (AP) More than half of Republican Gov. Bill Lee’s newly appointed cabinet members, including his education czar and Tennessee’s Medicaid chief, didn’t submit applications or provide any documents outlining why they deserved the jobs he gave them. The Associated Press reviewed all applications submitted to Lee’s office during his transition. This included submissions for

both cabinet spots and lower level jobs. More than 1,400 applicants, mostly based in Tennessee, reached out to Lee's office seeking employment. [LINK](#)

**Anti-union campaign gears up at Volkswagen, including Gov. Lee visit** (WDEF-TV) The union debate is heating up at the Chattanooga Volkswagen plant. A group of workers announced on Tuesday that they are reviving an organization to oppose unionization at the plant. They say "Southern Momentum" is a grassroots group dedicated to defeat the unionization drive at the Chattanooga plant. Workers voted down a plant-wide union in 2014 (712-626), though maintenance workers did approve a micro-union the next year, representing around 65 workers. But this year, the UAW succeeded in getting enough petitions at the plant to request a new vote. [LINK](#)

**Governor Lee's surprise visit to Volkswagen stirs union vote talk** (WRCB-TV) Tennessee Governor Bill Lee made a surprise visit to Chattanooga's Volkswagen plant Monday as he put it, on his "own time." Media outlets were not invited or given access, as he addressed plant employees who will soon choose whether or not to unionize. The mayors of Hamilton County and Chattanooga say they did not know the governor would be speaking at Volkswagen. However, someone recorded the governor's speech, and leaked the audio online, revealing a divided workforce. [LINK](#)

**Welcome to the World (Politico) Blake Harris, COS for Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee, and Holly Harris, a dietician, welcomed Peter Mitchell Harris, their third child. Pic** [LINK](#)

**Officials: Man charged with TennCare fraud after posing as enrollee's spouse for pills**(WKRN-TV) A Nashville man is being charged after police and state officials said he posed as the spouse of a TennCare enrollee in order to pick up her prescription for Oxycodone. According to the Tennessee Department of Finance & Administration, 34-year-old Robert Lee Nesbitt Jr. went to a pharmacy and claimed to be the enrollee's spouse so he could get the painkillers. "Opioid abuse is prevalent across the state and the nation but we are not going to allow it to be subsidized by TennCare," Inspector General Kim Harmon said. [LINK](#)

**University of Tennessee plans to sell Eugenia Williams home** (News Sentinel) The University of Tennessee is seeking approval to sell the Eugenia Williams home and use sale proceeds to expand scholarship opportunities for low-income students, according to an announcement the university made on Tuesday. The property was willed to the university in 1998 by Williams and was to be used as a home for the UT System president. [LINK](#)

**Leaders Convene to Address Opioid Epidemic in West Tennessee** (Memphis Flyer) Through the occasional tear, a longtime Memphis journalist told the story of his 27-year-old daughter's heroin overdose to a crowded room on Tuesday. At the West Tennessee Opioid Summit, Ron Maxey of The Daily Memphian said it has been almost five years since he found his daughter's lifeless body following a fatal overdose. He said he tells her story so that people will understand the effect that opioid abuse can have on families. Hundreds, including Shelby County Health Department (SCHD) officials, Memphis Fire and Police personnel, representatives of insurance carriers and pharmaceutical companies, law enforcement officials, and physicians gathered Tuesday to discuss the opioid epidemic in West Tennessee and brainstorm possible solutions. [LINK](#)

**West Tennessee Opioid Summit tackles growing crisis in the Mid-South** (WATN-TN) Local leaders are taking aim at the opioid epidemic. Doctors are revealing alarming numbers on the crisis in Tennessee. At Tuesday's West Tennessee Opioid Summit, medical experts joined Memphis Police Director Mike Rallings and business leaders to talk challenges and solutions. "It's such a huge problem that we're still growing the attention on trying to reverse what it's doing in our communities. The fact is over 1000 Tennesseans lost their lives to opioids last year and that's more than died in motor vehicle accidents," says Jim Lancaster, MD, Signa Sr. Medical Director. [LINK](#)

**Sexual Assault Center saw an increase in calls on Draft weekend** (WSMV-TV) The Sexual Assault Center saw a large increase in calls this past weekend. The center says reports of sexual assaults tend to spike on drinking holidays or when big events come to town, like the NFL Draft. SAC victim advocate Olivia Darrow says she's never seen six victims call the center in one weekend, until last week. "Two a day, it's a lot and that was just at the clinic," Darrow said. More victims went to area hospitals, like the woman who told police she was raped in an alley on East Nashville on Sunday. [LINK](#)

**Her Father Was Executed for Murder. She Still Wants to Know if He Did It.** (NY Times) April Alley had last spoken with her father when she was a girl of 10, so there was plenty of catching up to do when they met about 15 years later, in the noisy visiting area of a prison in Nashville. "I asked him, 'Did you do that? If you did or not, you're still my dad and I love you,'" Ms. Alley recalled. His reply was the same opaque answer he gave psychiatrists after his arrest in 1985, and continued to give to anyone who asked, right until his execution in 2006. He did not know. On Tuesday, Ms. Alley, 43, asked a judge in Memphis to grant her what the courts had refused her father during his lifetime: DNA testing of evidence from the murder. [LINK](#)

**Death row inmate Donnie Johnson in his own words: 'If my work is done, then I am content'** (Tennessean) With just weeks to go until his scheduled execution, Donnie Edward Johnson says he is "too blessed to be stressed." Johnson, 68, is on death row for killing his wife Connie Johnson in Memphis in 1984. In the decades since the crime, Johnson, who no longer contests his guilt, has become an elder in the Seventh-day Adventist Church behind bars. In a written answers responding to questions from the USA TODAY Network – Tennessee, Johnson talked about his late wife and his desire to "make amends for my many past mistakes." [LINK](#)

**Gov. Bill Lee's school voucher bill among final hurdles before the legislative session ends** (Tennessean) As Tennessee lawmakers look to adjourn for the year later this week, Gov. Bill Lee's signature school voucher bill remains the most significant issue yet to be settled. On Tuesday, the two chambers appointed members to a conference committee to settle their different versions of the bill. The committee will meet at 8 a.m. Wednesday. Typically, conference committees are rarely attended by non-lawmakers and generate little interest, as members make minor tweaks on bills to ensure passage of legislation in both chambers. [LINK](#)

**Conference committees to take up education savings account bill in effort to settle House, Senate differences** (Times Free Press) Tennessee Republican lawmakers will meet early Wednesday in a conference committee in an effort to iron out hard-set differences between the GOP-led House and Senate over Gov. Bill Lee's education savings account bill. It comes after the Senate on Tuesday approved its version of the bill. Lee's signature plan calls for spending an estimated \$110 million in state funds and more from local tax revenues to create an education savings account program to provide \$7,300 in public tax dollars for up to 15,000 parents of students living in targeted, lower-performing public school districts and help them pay for private school tuition and related expenses such as uniforms. [LINK](#)

**Lawmakers split on voucher bill; local officials oppose both versions** (Johnson City Press) Local opposition to Gov. Bill Lee's school voucher proposal remains as members of the state House and Senate work toward a compromise on two different versions of the legislation. Johnson City Schools Superintendent Steve Barnett said public schools are already struggling for adequate funding as it is. "It is our opinion that the state should look into fully funding public education before it begins funding the Education Savings Account Act," Barnett said Tuesday. Both Johnson City's and Washington County's boards of education passed resolutions opposing the original plan they believe aims to divert funds from public schools. [LINK](#)

**With no consensus on Tennessee vouchers, here are the issues for legislative negotiators** (Chalkbeat Tennessee) Unable to agree on Gov. Bill Lee's education voucher proposal, leaders of Tennessee's General Assembly sent two widely divergent bills Tuesday to legislative talks to try to reach a consensus. But the 10 conference committee members charged with sorting through the details have their work cut out for them as the legislature tries to wrap up its session this week. Awaiting the negotiators are big disagreements between the House and the Senate on the Republican governor's proposal to create education savings accounts, a newer type of voucher that would let some students use taxpayer money to pay for private school or related education services. [LINK](#)

**State lawmakers to negotiate voucher compromise** (AP) A split between the Tennessee House and Senate on a high-profile school voucher bill has forced both chambers to designate negotiators to come up with a compromise. Lawmakers on Tuesday refused to budge on their differences on the voucher bill after going back and forth on various amendments. Under Lee's proposal, parents of students in the state's four most-populated school districts could receive up to \$7,300 in state funds to spend on private school tuition and other approved expenses, but they would need to meet certain income requirements. [LINK](#)

**\$21M FedEx Memphis tax break heads to governor's desk (AP)** A bill to award FedEx \$21.3 million in tax breaks over seven years for its \$1.3 billion Memphis hub expansion is heading to Gov. Bill Lee's desk. Senators voted unopposed Tuesday for the incentives without questions or mention of FedEx. The House praised FedEx's project before passing the bill last week. It includes \$16.1 million in state and \$5.2 million in local sales and use tax exemptions for building materials for the FedEx project. Company spokeswoman Maury Donahue says FedEx would still pay more than \$30 million in sales tax with incentives for the project, which is expected to inject \$400 million-plus into Memphis' construction labor market. [LINK](#)

**JaJuan Latham Act passes Tennessee House (WBIR-TV)** A bill to toughen the penalty for those charged with hurting or killing children during a drive-by shooting has passed a major hurdle in the state legislature. The JaJuan Latham act passed the state house on Tuesday. It was recommended for passage in the Senate Finance, Ways, and Means Committee but a date for a vote hasn't been set yet. The bill is named in honor of a 12-year-old Knoxville who was killed by gunfire in 2016 while sitting in his father's car. Police said the the gang-related attack was actually targeting people attending a birthday party at Danny Mayfield Park. [LINK](#)

**Tenn. bill to toughen punishment against drive-by shooters who injure kids passes house(WVLT-TV)** House Representative Rick Staples said in a press release that his bill to toughen up punishment against drive-by shooters who injure or kill kids passed in the Tennessee House, Tuesday. Known as the JaJuan Latham Act, the bill "increases the penalty for an aggravated assault or homicide that occurs by a person discharging a firearm from within a motor vehicle and the victim is a minor at the time of the offense." The bill is named after a 12-year-old boy who was shot in his father's car after a "Stop the Violence" basketball game honoring JaJuan's cousin, Zaevion Dobson. [LINK](#)

**Tennessee lawmakers OK license suspension bill (AP)** Tennessee lawmakers have signed off on legislation that would prevent the state from revoking or suspending driver's licenses over unpaid court costs. The Senate on Tuesday advanced a proposal allowing people to still have a restricted driver's license while they pay off their court fines using a payment plan rather than face a possible suspension. The bill now goes to Gov. Bill Lee's desk. A restricted driver's license would allow people to drive only to work, school or their religious place of worship. [LINK](#)

**Bill to keep daylight saving year-round in Tennessee heads to Gov. Bill Lee's desk (AP)** A bill to keep Tennessee on daylight saving time year-round is headed to the governor's desk for his approval. Senate members advanced the proposal on Tuesday, allowing it to be sent to Gov. Bill Lee. The bill scraps the twice-annual time shift — but only if Congress first passes a federal law allowing states to observe daylight saving year-round. The General Assembly would then have to adopt the proposal. Other states are considering similar conditional legislation. President Donald Trump also likes the idea of permanent daylight saving nationwide. [LINK](#)

**Daylight Saving Time bill passes Tennessee Senate; Heading to Governor Bill Lee's desk(WZTV-TV)** The Daylight Saving Time bill has passed the Tennessee senate and will head to Governor Bill Lee's desk. The bill passed with a 29-1 vote, according to the Tennessee General Assembly. HB 0247 aims to establish Daylight Saving Time as the standard time in Tennessee. The legislation passed a House floor vote last week. It still must be signed off by Governor Lee, then go to Congress. If approved, it will come back to the Legislature. Under an amendment to the bill, the year-round Daylight Saving Time would start the first Sunday of November under compliance with the following requirements: [LINK](#)

**Bill that would permanently move Tennessee to Daylight Saving Time goes to governor, but still requires federal approval (Tennessean)** The state Senate on Tuesday overwhelmingly approved a bill that would put Tennessee permanently on Daylight Saving Time if the federal government ever agrees to allow it. House Bill 247 passed on a 29-1 vote. It now goes to Gov. Bill Lee for his consideration. "Ladies and gentlemen, it's about time," bill sponsor Sen. Steve Dickerson, R-Nashville, quipped to colleagues before the vote was taken. He previously told the Senate the legislation "is wildly popular among our constituents." [LINK](#)

**Photo gallery: Opposition to Tennessee's proposed anti-LGBT bills is growing among businesses (Tennessean)** [LINK](#)

**Don't get 'involved in politics,' Casada tells businesses opposed to Tennessee's anti-LGBT bills** (Tennessean) As an increasing number of businesses speak out against a series of bills critics say would hurt members of the LGBTQ community, House Speaker Glen Casada says the companies should stay out of politics. Casada's remarks are markedly different than his Senate counterpart, Lt. Gov. Randy McNally, who has expressed concerns about the financial implications that could come in response to the legislation. Over the weekend, the Tennessee Titans said they opposed a slate of bills and questioned whether Nashville could host another NFL Draft in the future if the measures were enacted. [LINK](#)

**Tennessee Senate Pushes Off Debate On Controversial Adoption Bill To 2020** (WPLN Radio) The Tennessee Senate has dropped a proposal that would let private adoption agencies reject would-be parents based on their religious beliefs. Backers of the bill (HB836/SB1304) had said the measure would protect faith-based organizations from lawsuits for following their moral beliefs. But lawmakers have been feeling mounting from companies and advocacy groups that have called the bill "discriminatory." [LINK](#)

**Tennessee delays bill allowing LGBT adoption refusals** (AP) Tennessee lawmakers on Tuesday spiked a proposal that would have allowed faith-based adoption agencies to refuse to place children with gay parents and other families because of their religious beliefs. The bill had been scheduled to be debated by the GOP-dominant Senate. However, at the last minute, the sponsor quietly asked for the proposal to be taken up next legislative session — essentially killing it for the year. There was no debate or explanation of why the bill was withdrawn. [LINK](#)

**Watered-down Tennessee 'bathroom bill' goes to governor** (AP) A watered-down bill to spell out that Tennessee's public indecency law applies to single-sex, multiperson bathrooms and changing rooms is heading to Republican Gov. Bill Lee. The Senate cleared Republican Sen. Mark Pody's bill in a 21-5 vote Tuesday. The House passed it earlier in the month. The Tennessee Equality Project says the bill's sections targeting transgender people were removed, but there's risk the bill could be misused to arrest transgender people. A letter from 11 large companies also identified it as one of several anti-LGBT bills, saying it "could unfairly target transgender Tennesseans for harassment in public places." [LINK](#)

**Law enforcement and Tri-Cities residents react to the hands free driving bill passing the Senate** (WJHL-TV) Tennessee is one step closer to banning handheld devices while driving. The hands free bill passed the Tennessee Senate on Tuesday with a 23-7 vote. The bill calls for drivers to mound their phones or use a bluetooth device while driving. The violation is a primary offense, which means police officers can pull a car over if they see a someone driving with a phone in their hand. According to the bills sponsor Rep. Holsclaw of Elizabethton, if the car is not in motion, the driver will not get pulled over for having a phone in their hand. [LINK](#)

**It may soon be illegal in Tennessee to use a hand-held cellphone while driving** (Tennessean) It may soon be illegal for Tennessee drivers to talk on the phone without a hands-free device. The state Senate on Tuesday approved a ban on a 23-7 vote. Under the legislation, which passed the House earlier this month, the state would prohibit drivers 18 and older from holding or physically supporting a phone while driving — unless they are using an "earpiece, headphone device, or device worn on a wrist to conduct a voice-based communication." Drivers could also take a call while the phone is mounted onto the dashboard. [LINK](#)

**Enhanced carry permit bill up for debate** (WTVF-TV) A bill that would reduce the amount of training someone needs to have a handgun carry permit nears its final hurdles to become law. It changes several key components of the carry permit program, and was discussed for hours Tuesday in the House. Currently, a handgun carry permit requires an eight hour training course including time on the range. But this bill would reduce the training to two hours. [LINK](#)

**Alzheimer's Advisory Council Bill heads to governor's desk** (WTVF-TV) The Alzheimer's Advisory Council bill is headed to the governor's desk after being passed through the House and Senate. House Bill 37 and Senate Bill 28 will create a statewide Alzheimer's Advisory Council, which will study the impacts of the disease on the state and its residents. It will also develop, in part, suggestions to help the thousands of Tennesseans who pay for Alzheimer's care for a loved one out of pocket. [LINK](#)

**Tennessee Senate, House agree to fully fund Katie Beckett waiver** (Johnson City Press) Following a brief impasse this weekend, the Tennessee Senate and House of Representatives have agreed to appropriate the full \$27 million needed to create a supplemental insurance program — commonly called a Katie Beckett waiver — to assist families of children with medically complex needs, regardless of their income. The full House of Representatives voted 96-0 Tuesday morning to approve the legislation, sponsored by Rep. Sam Whitson, R-Franklin, while the Senate Finance, Ways and Means Committee voted unanimously to approve the companion bill, carried by Sen. Kerry Roberts, R-Springfield. [LINK](#)

**Senate approves controversial Medicaid waiver legislation as National health organizations and patient groups urge Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee to oppose it** (Times Free Press) The Republican Senate approved a previously passed House bill that directs the Lee administration to seek a waiver of federal Medicaid rules that would restructure federal financing for much of the state's TennCare program for the poor. House Bill 1280 passed 24-5 despite the last-minute plea from a dozen national patient groups including The American Cancer Society, American Heart Association and American Lung Association. [LINK](#)

**Tennessee close to advancing Medicaid block grant bill** (AP) Tennessee lawmakers are inching closer to advancing a proposal that would significantly change how the state provides health care to its lower-income and disabled residents. The GOP-controlled Senate on Tuesday voted 24-5 on a measure requiring the state's top leaders to call on the federal government to send a fixed amount of money each year in the form of block grants. The bill now goes to the House to approve last-minute changes. Supporters argue the move allows Tennessee to better manage its Medicaid program. Critics counter it'll open up opportunities to cut services. [LINK](#)

**Driving while using cell-phone ban, online sports betting bill to become laws July 1** (WKRN-TV) Tennesseans will soon be able to make sports bets online, but they will face fines if caught driving anywhere while holding a cell phone. Both bills were part of a day that signals the end is near for this legislative session. The so-called "hands-free bill" which makes it illegal to use a cell phone if you are driving, would take effect July 1. The measure makes allowances for those over 18-years-old to use a hands-free cell phone device while driving but bans them for drivers under 18. "We have a responsibility as a body to do what is necessary for the public good," said Senate sponsor Art Swann before the measure passed 23-7. [LINK](#)

**Bill banning cell phone use while driving arrives at governor's desk** (WBBJ-TV) A bill has arrived at Governor Bill Lee's desk that will change driving in Tennessee. Both the House and Senate bills would prohibit the use of handheld devices while driving. Drivers could still talk on the phone with the help of hands-free devices. The senate bill passed Tuesday afternoon by a 23-7 vote. If Lee signs the bill, Tennessee will become the 19th state to prohibit hand held cell phone use while driving. Crockett County sheriff Troy Klyce said the bill is addressing a serious problem. "It's a significant issue. We make a lot of traffic stops, and the call always comes in of an impaired driver," Klyce said. [LINK](#)

**State Sen. Steve Dickerson cooperating with feds to 'minimize his exposure,' attorney says** (Tennessean) Tennessee state Sen. Steve Dickerson is cooperating with a federal investigation to "minimize his exposure" in a looming government lawsuit that will accuse his pain management company of widespread fraud, according to an email from the lawmaker's attorney obtained by The Tennessean. The email was filed as a court exhibit to support legal arguments questioning Dickerson's credibility as a witness in a separate, but related court case. In the email, attorney Ed Yarbrough said Dickerson, R-Nashville, is assisting with a federal investigation of Comprehensive Pain Specialists, of which he is both a founder and co-owner. The investigation is by Department of Justice civil prosecutors at the U.S. Attorney's Office in Nashville. [LINK](#)

**Vanderbilt poll: Frustration over Nashville's fast growth on the rise** (Nashville Business Journal) A new Vanderbilt University poll provides another window into the mounting tensions over Nashville's future. The share of residents who think the fast-growing city is headed in the right direction continues to shrink. It now tops just over 50 percent of those surveyed, down 19 percentage points from 2015, the poll's inaugural year. Meanwhile, 45 percent of respondents think Nashville is headed in the wrong direction, up 23 percentage points since 2015, according to the poll, which was released today. [LINK](#)

**Today in History (AP)** In 1982, the World's Fair in Knoxville, Tennessee, was opened by President Ronald Reagan. [LINK](#)

## **OPINION**

**David Plazas: Concealed handgun permits should not become easier to get in Tennessee. Citizens should be better trained on guns.** (Tennessean) When gun control advocates and NRA-certified instructors align on a firearms issue, our elected officials should pay attention. In this polarized political environment and in this age of too many mass shootings, these sides are typically portrayed as enemies: Either pro- or anti-Second Amendment zealots. However, on April 24, at the Cordell Hull legislative building in downtown Nashville, they showed they had found common ground around the issue of safety and responsibility. [LINK](#)

**Frank Cagle: Voucher lemmings may regret betraying voters** (KnoxTNToday) A bill has to get 50 votes in the state House in order to pass. When the voucher bill stalled at 49 votes, House Speaker Glen Casada refused to record the votes and spent 40 minutes trying to get someone to switch to yes. During those 40 minutes a veteran legislator told me on the phone, "Now is somebody's chance to get a four-lane highway." It was "Let's Make a Deal" for two weeks before the voucher vote as Gov. Bill Lee and Casada sought that magic number 50. The extent of Lee's personal arm twisting and lobbying of House members was an unprecedented interference in the legislature by the executive branch. [LINK](#)

**Column: What is a 'non-campaign campaign' event?** (Kingsport Times-News) Former Tennessee Gov. Phil Bredesen, a Democrat, used to do them. So did former U.S. Sen. Bob Corker, a Republican. Former President Barack Obama once did one at a Kroger in Bristol, Va. I'm talking about what I call "non-campaign campaign" events. These events are organized by the officeholder and paid for by the taxpayer, but almost look like a campaign road show. U.S. Rep. Phil Roe, during his latest district work period, crisscrossed the First Congressional District and flooded the calendar with events from Erwin to Jefferson City. On a Monday afternoon, he met with the region's top cops in Kingsport to hear their concerns about gangs and staffing. [LINK](#)

**Guest column: Democratic Party must stand with sexual harassment, assault survivors** (Tennessean) Democrats, let's have a talk. Fresh out of my two-year term as executive vice president of the Tennessee Young Democrats, I let out a breath for what seemed like a stellar few years. But it was also a breath of relief. Navigating the political system as a survivor of sexual violence was one of the hardest things I've done. My rapist was a Democratic political operative, and when I reported to his boss, who would become a failed candidate for the Alabama state House, I was shut down and silenced. Similarly, what we're witnessing now is the junction where party officials must make the determination whether to stand for what is moral or what is politically expedient. [LINK](#)

**Editorial: Noland still right fit for ETSU** (Johnson City Press) We can't say we blame Dr. Brian Noland for exploring the opportunity to lead the University of Tennessee's Knoxville campus. After all, it's the state's primary research institution, a highly regarded academic center and a cultural icon in the eyes of many a sports fan. But we can't help but be thankful that Noland elected to pull out of the UT chancellor process to remain president at East Tennessee State University. His seven-year tenure has been assuringly stable, thoughtfully aggressive at times and often skillful, and ETSU is by no means small potatoes. [LINK](#)



## **Erin Merrick**

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**From:** News Clips  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 1, 2019 1:22 PM  
**To:** AE-Governors\_Staff  
**Subject:** News Alert: The Tennessean "Tennessee governor touts non-union workplace in speech at Volkswagen plant"

**Read [here](#)**

### **Tennessee governor touts non-union workplace in speech at Volkswagen plant Ted Evanoff, Memphis Commercial Appeal Published 1:01 p.m. CT May 1, 2019**

Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee touted non-union shops in a speech made to VW Chattanooga workers expecting to vote soon on UAW representation.

Continuing a theme of other top Republican politicians in the state, Lee praised direct conversation between employees and managers in a wide-ranging speech Monday to workers inside the 3,800-employee Volkswagen car plant located in East Tennessee.

Union officials expect the National Labor Relations Board, a federal agency, will schedule a vote this spring for VW's hourly employees to decide whether to join the Detroit-based United Auto Workers union.

Lee's address appears milder than the stances taken by other Republican politicians in Tennessee in a concerted effort since 2014 to ward off a union in the plant. On April 18, Tennessee Sen. Marsha Blackburn said, "We don't need union bosses in Detroit telling Tennessee what's best for our workers," the Chattanooga Times Free Press reported.

Lee's speech was closed to news reporters. Labor Notes, a trade journal founded in 1979 in Detroit, says it obtained a recording made inside the plant at the time of the speech.

According to the newspaper's account of the recording, Lee touched on his previous role inside his own family-owned business, saying, "I do believe, based on my personal experience of working with hundreds of skilled trades people over 35 years of working, that every workplace has challenges."

Lee Co. was founded by the governor's grandfather in Franklin, Tennessee. The fabricating firm sells about \$250 million annually of plumbing, electrical, heating and cooling equipment, reports The Tennessean, a newspaper in Nashville. Lee stepped down as chairman of the board of directors when he took office.

According to Labor Notes, Lee went on to say, "There are things in your workplace that you wish were different. I also believe ... that when I have a direct relationship with you, the worker, and you're working for me, that is when the environment works the best."

Asked about the comments, Lee's spokeswoman, Laine Arnold, said VW invited the governor to speak. Arnold, in an email, said Lee "highlighted the administration's commitment to workforce development... and why this state is such an attractive place for business development. During the speech, he acknowledged that plant workers are facing an important vote in the coming weeks and

he shared his own personal experiences in business and how he worked to create an environment where his employees thrived."

She did not explain why Lee, who took office in January and has been touring the state, would close a speech to news reporters.

VW spokeswoman Amanda Plecas said the visit "was not union-related," the Chattanooga Times Free Press reported.

The UAW represents more than 5,000 people in Tennessee, chiefly General Motors employees in a Memphis distribution center and the Spring Hill assembly complex outside Nashville.

"Gov. Lee has already embraced the UAW leadership at the Spring Hill plant," said Brian Rothenberg, spokesman for the 400,000-member UAW at its Detroit headquarters. "The real question was why wouldn't the governor want the Chattanooga workers to have the same rights to bargain as the workers in Spring Hill?"

In January, Lee attended GM Chairman Mary Barra's event in Spring Hill that commemorated the launch of the Cadillac XT6 sport-utility vehicle with GM Spring Hill executives, plant employees and Mike Herron, UAW Local 1853 chairman. Herron greeted Lee on the event stage.

Unions in Tennessee historically have had limited reach. Although a robust industrial sector has emerged in the state, 5.5 percent of employees in all sectors were union members in 2018, compared to 14.5 percent in Michigan, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data shows. Unions negotiate legal contracts for wages, benefits, work rules and safety matters.

The UAW was founded in Detroit in 1935 amid the tumultuous Great Depression and has since then represented production workers employed by the Detroit automakers. GM opened the Spring Hill plant in 1990 under a UAW labor contract that quickly opened way for union representation.

In Chattanooga, VW began making cars in 2011. The German automaker has received about \$800 million in tax breaks and public incentives. The new factory was expected to follow German tradition and elect a union. German unions have a voice at the company's board level.

In 2014, production and skilled-trades workers rejected UAW representation. Detroit UAW officials contend anti-union comments by former Sen. Bob Corker and former Gov. Bill Haslam played a part in the outcome. Politicians had argued a union could thwart VW expansions.

While VW has said its executives will not take a stand on union representation, Blackburn continued the message from 2014 this year, saying unionization efforts at VW "will harm its workers." Separately, the Center for Union Facts placed advertisements this spring on Chattanooga billboards with short messages that contend the UAW engages in corrupt practices.

The campaign by the Washington-based center is aimed at top UAW leadership but hasn't spelled out questionable practices. In March, the Detroit News reported: "Federal agents are investigating whether senior United Auto Workers staff were forced to contribute money to funds originally established to buy flowers for auto workers' funerals, and whether union executives pocketed the cash."

Separate from the accusations, VW Chattanooga workers who actively opposed the 2014 union vote have revived their group, Southern Momentum.

In Detroit, the UAW's Rothenberg said he expects the union vote will be set this spring. Scheduling the vote has been complicated by the 2015 formation of UAW Local 42, which represents 162 skilled trade workers who voted for unionization. VW and the UAW disagree on whether the local can also represent production workers.

**Erin Merrick**

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**From:** News Clips  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 2, 2019 7:23 AM  
**To:** AE-Governors\_Staff  
**Subject:** Daily News Clips - May 2

## Thursday, May 2

MAY 2, 2019

**Ahead of UAW vote, Gov. Bill Lee touts non-union workplace in speech at Volkswagen plant**(Commercial Appeal) Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee touted non-union shops in a speech made to VW Chattanooga workers expecting to vote soon on UAW representation. Continuing a theme of other top Republican politicians in the state, Lee praised direct conversation between employees and managers in a wide-ranging speech Monday to workers inside the 3,800-employee Volkswagen car plant located in East Tennessee. Union officials expect the National Labor Relations Board, a federal agency, will schedule a vote this spring for VW's hourly employees to decide whether to join the Detroit-based United Auto Workers union. [LINK](#)

**Sexual Assault Center handles a spike in rape kits** (WTVF-TV) Since opening last fall, the Nashville's Sexual Assault Center has completed more than 100 rape kits. With more people coming forward, the demand can be hard to keep up with. But, the center explains that new funding may give them a hand. This past weekend, six survivors came in to the Sexual Assault center to have rape kit exams performed. Since opening in September 2018, the center says their SAFE clinic completed 130 exams. It's a number well past their anticipated amount. [LINK](#)

**Officials: Woman must repay state after TennCare fraud** (WVLT-TV) A Hardin County woman charged with TennCare fraud has been ordered to repay the state, according to the Office of the Inspector General. Samantha Briley, 31, was sentenced in Hardin County where she was accused of enrolling in TennCare by claiming to live in Tennessee when she was actually living in Alabama. Briley was ordered to repay the state over \$15,000 for benefits she and her family received while they were on the program. The inspector general's office said she will also serve 78 days in jail and be on probation until 2025. [LINK](#)

**Hardin Co. woman must repay state for TennCare benefits** (WBBJ-TV) A Hardin County woman arrested in March and charged with TennCare fraud is ordered to repay the state thousands of dollars. Samantha Briley, 31, was sentenced in Hardin County, where she was accused of enrolling in TennCare by claiming to live in Tennessee when she was actually living in Alabama. Briley has been ordered to repay the state over \$15,000 for benefits she and her family received while they were on the program. Briley will also serve 78 days in jail and be on probation until 2025. [LINK](#)

**Alabama woman ordered to repay \$15,000 for TennCare fraud in Hardin County** (Savannah Courier) An Alabama woman is ordered to repay the state more than \$15,000 after she was charged with TennCare fraud for allegedly lying about her residency to enroll in the state's healthcare insurance program. In a news release, the Office of Inspector General announced Wednesday that Samantha J. Briley, 31, was sentenced in Hardin County, where she was accused of enrolling in TennCare by claiming to live in Tennessee when she was actually a resident of Florence, Alabama, which is across the state border and south of Hardin County. Briley must repay the state a total of \$15,327.06 for benefits she and her family received while they were on the program. [LINK](#)

**Former President George W. Bush coming to chamber benefit in Tennessee** (WCYB-TV) Former President George W. Bush will be coming to Athens, Tennessee, in June. The Athens Area Chamber of Commerce is having its 13th annual benefit on June 22 at McMinn County High School. Money raised from the event will go towards rebuilding the chamber office which was destroyed in a fire last year. Previous speakers at the event

include Peyton Manning, Tim Tebow, Nick Saban, Kirk Cameron, Herschel Walker, Bo Jackson and Amy Grant. For more information, call 423-745-0334. You can also purchase tickets online by clicking here. [LINK](#)

**National Group Wants To Reopen Tennessee Death Row Case, 13 Years After Execution** (WPLN Radio) A national criminal justice group is asking a court in Memphis and Gov. Bill Lee to re-examine the case of a man executed 13 years ago. The Innocence Project says there are inconsistencies in the evidence that was used to convict Sedley Alley for the rape and murder of a woman in the 1980s. They believe another person — possibly a Missouri man arrested late last year — committed the crime. “This is a horrible crime,” says Barry Scheck, the Innocence Project’s founder. “This is the kind of crime that somebody enraged, certainly somebody engaged in serial killing, might have committed.” [LINK](#)

**Q&A: Kayla Gore, lead plaintiff in lawsuit against Tennessee** (Memphis Flyer) Four transgender Tennesseans sued the state last week to challenge a law prohibiting them from changing the gender marker on their birth certificates. The case was filed by Lambda Legal, a national advocacy group working for the civil rights of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender people, and those with HIV. A lead plaintiff in the case is Kayla Gore, 33, of Memphis. Tennessee is one of only three states, including Kansas and Ohio, that bars citizens from changing their gender on their birth certificate. [LINK](#)

**Ahead of May 16 Execution, Don Johnson Says ‘I Am at Peace’** (Nashville Scene) Unless Gov. Bill Lee shows mercy on him, Don Johnson will be executed on May 16, almost 35 years after he was convicted of murdering his wife, Connie Johnson. That is truly the only thing that will save Johnson’s life. He directed his attorneys to forego the typical flurry of court filings as his execution date approaches, opting to rely solely on the governor’s ability to spare him. His case for clemency relies heavily on the forgiveness of Connie’s daughter, Cynthia Vaughn — who reconciled with her stepfather after once publicly cheering for his execution — and Johnson’s own transformation during his time in prison. After being sent to prison he became a professing Christian and an ordained elder in the Seventh Day Adventist Church. [LINK](#)

**Lawmakers approve controversial school vouchers bill, sending it to Gov. Bill Lee** (Tennessean) After months of deliberations and near-constant changes, Tennessee’s school voucher legislation is now headed to the desk of Gov. Bill Lee, giving the first-term executive a major, albeit narrow, win three months after taking office. Despite looming questions about the bill’s constitutionality and financial implications for taxpayers, a final version of the bill passed Wednesday after approval in both chambers of the General Assembly. [LINK](#)

**School voucher bill headed to Governor Lee’s desk** (WTVF-TV) A governor-backed plan to give private tuition to students in the state’s lowest performing schools passed through the legislature Wednesday. After debate in a joint committee this morning, a compromise of the Education Savings Account plan was approved by both houses. It now heads to Governor Bill Lee’s desk. He’s expected to sign it. [LINK](#)

**School voucher program could total more than \$330M by 2024 but not all with new money, analysis shows** (Tennessean) The amount of money that could go toward Gov. Bill Lee’s controversial school voucher program could exceed \$330 million by 2024, although not all of that would be new tax dollars, according to a new fiscal analysis. Lawmakers gave final approval Wednesday to the education savings account program after adopting a conference committee report that worked out differences between the House and Senate versions of the legislation. Still, the debate was not always smooth as confusion over the fiscal analysis forced Senators to delay their vote. A new, updated analysis was later released. [LINK](#)

**Voucher bill heads to Tennessee Gov. Lee** (AP) Tennessee lawmakers have wrapped up their work on a voucher-style bill, punctuated by a Senate debate over projected costs and provisions that could make students from families who are in the country illegally ineligible. Close House and Senate votes Tuesday offer freshman Republican Gov. Bill Lee the chance to sign his most contentious policy proposal to date. [LINK](#)

**Legislature passes governor’s voucher bill amid dollars dispute** (Daily Memphian) The Legislature adopted Gov. Bill Lee’s voucher legislation Wednesday, allowing public dollars to be used to send children to private schools. The approval came out of a hotly contested compromise report despite doubts raised about its long-term financial implications. Some estimates are that the program could end up costing about \$169 million by fiscal 2023-24. The estimate by Gov. Bill Lee’s administration was \$125 million through five years. The Senate

voted 19-14 to approve the compromise report – two more than needed for passage – even though Democratic state Sens. Raumesh Akbari and Jeff Yarbrow challenged the projected cost of a conference committee report put together by Republican state Sen. Brian Kelsey. [LINK](#)

**Amendments in Tennessee voucher bill total over \$3.5 million** (WATN-TV) The Tennessee House voted Wednesday to send the Education Savings Account or voucher bill to Governor Bill Lee's desk. It was touted as giving parents more choice in their children's education. However, taxpayers will fork over more than \$3.5 million to pay for administrative costs before the pilot program even gets off the ground. Sponsors say it's desperately needed. "We got kids in a bad environment," said Tennessee State Rep. Bill Dunn. [LINK](#)

**Governor Lee's new voucher bill to cost \$335M in 5 years** (AP) Gov. Bill Lee's latest proposal to increase the amount of public dollars that can pay for private tuition and other expenses will cost taxpayers more than \$335 million over the next five years. Lee's bill was originally estimated to cost \$125 million to fund the so-called education savings account bill. However, after various amendments and changes, the latest fiscal analysis has the bill's funding total much higher. [LINK](#)

**Tennessee lawmakers approve controversial school voucher bill, sending it to Gov. Bill Lee amid questions on cost** (Times Free Press) The Republican-led Tennessee Senate gave final approval Wednesday to Gov. Bill Lee's school education savings account plan amid questions over its actual costs, with one GOP lawmaker warning colleagues that "fuzzy math like this is how majorities become minorities." The bill, which cleared the House earlier, passed the Senate on a 19-14 vote. Sen. Todd Gardenhire, R-Chattanooga, was among nine Republicans voting no ... [LINK](#)

**Lawmakers Vote To Bring School Vouchers To Tennessee, But With An Increased Price Tag** (WPLN Radio) After weeks of negotiations, the Tennessee General Assembly passed Gov. Bill Lee's biggest education initiative Wednesday. But the final version has a higher price tag than originally estimated. The measure to introduce a school voucher-like program is now expected to cost the state a little over \$169 million, according to a fiscal analysis. This is nearly \$45 million more than the amount Lee's administration previously announced, which was \$125 million by 2024. [LINK](#)

**House, Senate hash out voucher deal** (Nashville Post) Compromise on governor's education savings account proposal paves way for legislature's adjournment for the year. The House and Senate on Wednesday struck a deal to streamline their divergent versions of first-year Gov. Bill Lee's voucher-like education savings account proposal, paving the way to an imminent adjournment of the legislature for the year. In the Wednesday morning meeting of the conference committee made up of Senate and House representatives and tasked with negotiating a compromise, Sen. Brian Kelsey (R-Germantown) introduced a deal that conceded some House priorities while making other changes to the bill. [LINK](#)

**Immigrant rights group sees possible legal challenge over Tennessee's school voucher program** (Tennessean) Gov. Bill Lee scored an eleventh-hour win on his landmark, controversial education savings account proposal, but opponents already see legal challenges in the program's future. The Senate and House voted to approve the measure Wednesday, which will head to Lee for his signature. To exclude immigrant students and their families who are in the country illegally, House and Senate lawmakers included a provision that makes the program a public benefit. By law, immigrants without proper documentation aren't allowed to use public benefits. [LINK](#)

**Photo Gallery: Closing days of the Tennessee Legislature: Voucher bill and other business** (Tennessean) [LINK](#)  
**Senate passes ESA "voucher-style" bill in 19-14 vote** (WJHL-TV) A controversial bill that would implement Education Savings Accounts for some Tennessee students passed the third consideration in the Senate on Wednesday. The bill passed a conference committee\* Wednesday morning in a 30-minute session before heading to the Senate for its third consideration. After a lengthy discussion on the bill, Senators moved the bill forward in a 19-14 vote. [LINK](#)

**Gov. Lee's ESA compromise adopted by TN House, Senate** (WKRN-TV) Just when it appeared to be close to a done deal, drama returned to Governor Bill Lee's ever-changing, ever questioned Education Savings Account (ESA) bill, but the State Senate put an end to the drama approving the landmark legislation by a 19-14 vote. By

an earlier 51-46 vote, the House passed the compromise this morning that includes \$7,300 yearly for up to 15,000 students in low performing schools in Davidson and Shelby Counties, but the same compromise was questioned by some Senate members for its cost. Governor Bill Lee's original proposal put the cost at about \$25 million for the initial year of the program that now begins in 2020. [LINK](#)

**Voucher compromise approved by both chambers** (TN Journal) The House voted 51-46 to approve the compromise on Gov. Bill Lee's voucher bill. The Senate followed suit 19-14 later in the day. The freshman governor says he "looks forward to signing this bill into law." ... The vote was 50-48 when it cleared the chamber the first time. There were several changes between the two votes, though. they include: From no to yes: Reps. Patsy Hazlewood (R-Chattanooga), David Wright (R-Corryton). From absent to yes: Rep. Debra Moody (R-Covington). From yes to abstain: Reps. Martin Daniel (R-Knoxville), Brandon Ogles (R-Franklin). [LINK](#)

**The Latest: Voucher bill heads to Tennessee Gov. Lee** (WDEF-TV) Tennessee lawmakers have wrapped up their work on a voucher-style bill, punctuated by a Senate debate over projected costs and provisions that could make students from families who are in the country illegally ineligible. Close House and Senate votes Wednesday offer freshman Republican Gov. Bill Lee the chance to sign his most contentious policy proposal to date. The GOP-supermajority House and Senate passed a negotiated version of the bill that would increase the amount of public dollars that can pay for private tuition and other expenses. [LINK](#)

**State lawmakers concerned about Nashville's private parking deal, won't pursue block**(Tennessean) State lawmakers representing Davidson County met with Mayor David Briley's administration early Wednesday to be briefed on Nashville's private parking deal. Metro is currently in contract talks with a private company to take over the city's on-street parking for 30 years. In a deal that officials say would mean more than \$325 million for Nashville, the company will issue tickets, collect fines and issue permits for valet parking, loading zones and street parking in residential areas. [LINK](#)

**Mayor's office meets with lawmakers concerned about privatizing parking meters** (WTVF-TV) Davidson County lawmakers met this morning with representatives from Mayor David Briley's office to discuss the proposal to privatize parking meters. Representative Bob Freeman (D) said in the meeting "people are concerned about the plan and don't feel like their voices are being heard." He said constituents have called them with their concerns. [LINK](#)

**Bill bans handheld cell phone use while behind the wheel** (WTVF-TV) Tennessee lawmakers passed a bill that would make driving while holding a cell phone illegal, sending the measure to Governor Bill Lee's desk. The bill aims to cut down on distracted driving. According to a recent study , Tennessee leads the nation in cell phone distracted driving deaths. If the bill is signed into law, drivers would still be able to use their phones while behind the wheel, but they would not be able to physically hold the phone. Drivers could mount their phone on their dashboard or put the phone in a place like a cupholder. [LINK](#)

**"Hands-Free" bill headed to Gov. Lee's desk** (WCYB-TV) Tennessee is known as the Volunteer State. But it's also known for something not so good. A study reviewed by state legislators ranks Tennessee first in fatalities involving drivers distracted by their cell phone. It found the state has the highest rate of distracted driving deaths five times the national average. "Distractions are becoming more and more of an issue as we have more and more distractions in our car" says Officer Tom Patton from the Kingsport Police Department. [LINK](#)

**Tennessee lawmakers OK license suspension bill** (AP) Tennessee lawmakers have signed off on legislation that would prevent the state from revoking or suspending driver's licenses over unpaid court costs. The Senate on Tuesday advanced a proposal allowing people to still have a restricted driver's license while they pay off their court fines using a payment plan rather than face a possible suspension. The bill now goes to Gov. Bill Lee's desk. A restricted driver's license would allow people to drive only to work, school or their religious place of worship. [LINK](#)

**Multimillion-dollar bill to reimburse Tennessee law enforcement agencies for costs transporting the mentally ill goes to governor** (Times Free Press) Tennessee local law enforcement agencies would be reimbursed millions of dollars statewide for costs they face for transporting persons believed to be mentally ill to hospitals under a bill headed to Gov. Bill Lee's desk. The Senate voted 32-0 for the transport-cost

reimbursement bill, sponsored by Sen. Todd Gardenhire, R-Chattanooga. House Bill 643, sponsored by Rep. Mike Carter, R-Ooltewah, previously passed the House. [LINK](#)

**Excitement, concerns over online sports betting coming to Tennessee** (WTVF-TV) Bringing sports betting to Tennessee is a big change to a state that has normally stayed away from expanding gambling. After a narrow Senate vote this week, Governor Bill Lee is planning to make the online sports betting legislation into law without his signature. By allowing sports betting in Tennessee, it is projected to bring in an annual \$50 million, according to sponsor Senator Steve Dickerson, R-Nashville. Cal Spears, the CEO of RotoGrinders.com, a Nashville-based daily fantasy sports subscription website, said he is excited. He was also surprised that the bill would be passed knowing it was a big tackle to even legalize daily fantasy sports in 2016. [LINK](#)

**Sports betting is coming to Tennessee** (Nashville Business Journal) Tennessee sports fans will soon be able to put their money where their mouth is — legally. With support from Republicans and Democrats, the Tennessee Senate voted Tuesday to legalize online sports betting. Having already been approved by the House, it now heads to the desk of Gov. Bill Lee, who intends to allow the proposal to become law without his signature, according to his spokesman. “The governor has said he does not believe that the expansion of gambling is best, but he recognizes that many in the Legislature found this to be an issue they want to explore further,” spokesman Laine Arnold said. [LINK](#)

**Senate rejects controversial bathroom bill, opting to delay action until 2020** (Tennessean) A controversial bill seeking to allow schools to create policies related to bathroom usage has stalled in the Senate. During a late night Senate floor session Wednesday, the upper chamber opted against voting on the measure, sending it instead to be considered in 2020. The legislation, sponsored by Rep. Andy Holt, R-Dresden, and Sen. Joey Hensley, R-Hohenwald, would have allowed the state attorney general to represent local school districts that adopt policies requiring students to use facilities based on their sex at birth. [LINK](#)

**Bill requiring state defense of schools bathroom policy axed** (AP) A bill authorizing Tennessee’s attorney general to defend a public school’s transgender bathroom and locker room policy is dead for the year. The state Senate cast a voice vote Wednesday to delay consideration of Republican Sen. Joey Hensley’s bill until 2020. Some senators were heard voting to keep the bill alive. Under the bill, school districts could be represented by the attorney general’s office or outside counsel if they face a lawsuit over policies designating use of restrooms, locker rooms or other facilities based on biological sex. [LINK](#)

**Senate passes Kelsey resolution to pay college players for performance** (Daily Memphian) State Sen. Brian Kelsey’s push to pay college athletes for performance got a boost in the General Assembly this week. The Senate voted 20-4 in favor of Kelsey’s Senate Resolution 22 urging Tennessee’s public universities to cooperate with athletic conferences to come up with a plan for paying student athletes. Kelsey introduced the resolution but gave little explanation Tuesday in the Senate, and no debate took place. Kelsey, a Germantown Republican who also represents Cordova and East Memphis, has pointed out athletes such as Duke University’s former basketball player Zion Williamson put their NBA career and millions of dollars at risk for little in return by playing in college. [LINK](#)

**\$22M tax break for 15 professions heads to Gov. Lee’s desk** (AP) Tennessee lawmakers have passed a \$22.3 million Tennessee tax break for 15 professions, sending the bill to Republican Gov. Bill Lee. On Wednesday, the Senate cast a final vote to remove the \$400 occupational privilege tax paid by a variety of professionals: accountants, architects, athlete agents, audiologists, chiropractors, dentists, engineers, landscape architects, optometrists, pharmacists, podiatrists, psychologists, real estate brokers, speech pathologists and veterinarians. Some professionals would still have to pay it: agents, broker-dealers, investment advisers, osteopathic physicians and physicians. [LINK](#)

**State program to help volunteer fire departments** (Johnson City Press) Legislation to lend a funding hand to local volunteer firefighters has cleared the Tennessee General Assembly. A bill to help volunteer fire departments pay for training and to cover matching federal grants for capital needs was approved by the House on Monday. The bill’s sponsor, state Rep. Timothy Hill, R-Blountville, said it creates a program to be



managed by the commissioner of the state Department of Commerce and Insurance to award grants to VFDs to purchase equipment or to meet the 10% local match requirements for federal grants. [LINK](#)

**Churches, TV stations anticipate impacts of Daylight Saving Time bill** (WKRN-TV) As Tennessee's Daylight Saving Time bill heads to Gov. Bill Lee's desk, residents are anticipating the perks and challenges of not having to change their clocks. Fast-forward to November 3, the day you're supposed to wake up with an extra hour of sleep. That could very well change if Gov. Lee signs the bill. Instead, that Sunday morning would be just like any other day. "I think it's a great thing," said Talor Russell, a Tennessee resident. "Just keep it simple. Keep it the same." [LINK](#)

**Bill to keep year-round daylight saving time in Tennessee heads to Gov. Lee's desk** (WTVF-TV) A bill that would observe daylight saving time year-round in Tennessee is headed to Governor Bill Lee for approval. The bill is heading to the governor's desk for signature after the Senate passed the legislation on Tuesday. However, the law can't go into effect unless it's signed off by the federal government. [LINK](#)

**Did House Speaker's office attempt to frame activist? DA asks for special prosecutor to investigate** (WTVF-TV) Did Tennessee House Speaker Glen Casada's office try to frame a young activist who had challenged Republican lawmakers during this year's legislative session? An exclusive NewsChannel 5 investigation has uncovered new evidence – including racist text messages – that raise questions about the Speaker's \$200,000-a-year chief of staff, Cade Cothren. Now, Nashville District Attorney General Glenn Funk has requested a special prosecutor to take a hard look at the case. "This was an extreme form of retaliation where you are willing to lie to take away somebody's freedom," said Justin Jones, the student activist who was targeted by the Speaker's office. [LINK](#)

**Why this Republican lawmaker hired his own personal lobbyist to work the Capitol halls**(Tennessean) Last month, Tennessee state Rep. Martin Daniel officially hired a lobbyist, making him the first lawmaker in recent memory to have such an employee at his disposal. On paper, Nashville resident Drew Lonergan has worked for Daniel since March 25. That's when he filed his lobbyist registration with the Tennessee Ethics Commission. But Lonergan has a long history with Daniel, including previously working for him in his legislative office, on his campaign, and lobbying for the Knoxville Republican since the start of this year. [LINK](#)

**US Supreme Court strips TVA of automatic immunity from some lawsuits** (Tennessean) The Tennessee Valley Authority and its contractors cannot invoke a broad shield of governmental immunity to stave off lawsuits over injuries tied to the utility's power production, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled this week. The Supreme Court rejected TVA's claim that as a "public corporation" created by Congress, the utility — the nation's largest electricity provider — can use the government's shield of immunity when either the utility or its contractors are accused in lawsuits of wrongdoing related to the power business. [LINK](#)

**Fort Loudon trash fire: What we know now** (News Sentinel) Firefighters expect they'll spend the next few days extinguishing the last hot spots and embers at the recycling plant on Hancock Street, where owners said sparks from a backfiring forklift Wednesday afternoon apparently started what became a blaze covering roughly two acres. Fire crews have worked around the clock, boxing the blaze in and spraying the flames with water throughout the night. Bulldozers and backhoes may be brought in Thursday to help dig through the burning layers of trash and extinguish the flames beneath the surface. [LINK](#)

**Knoxville fire: 'If you can see or smell smoke, move away from the area'** (News Sentinel) The Knox County Health Department is warning residents in North Knoxville near the site of an ongoing fire at Fort Loudon Waste and Recycling about potential impacts on air quality in the area. "To protect your health, it's important to remember that if you can see or smell smoke, move away from the area," Knox County Air Quality Director Lynne Liddington said in a release Wednesday afternoon. [LINK](#)

**Residents near Fort Loudon Waste & Recycling fire evacuated** (WATE-TV) The Emerald Youth Foundation and the Salvation Army are providing shelter for those affected by the Fort Loudon Waste & Recycling fire on Wednesday. "Neighbors if you are being affected by the North Knox fire you can come here. We are opening our air conditioned gym and providing water and dinner to those that need it tonight. Please bring a pillow and blanket," the Salvation Army said in a Facebook post. Knoxville Fire Department issued a precautionary

(see video) then later a mandatory evacuation Wednesday afternoon for nearby residents, with about 65 homes affected. [LINK](#)

**'It's a big trash fire' | Voluntary evacuations in place as crews continue to battle massive fire**(WBIR-TV) UPDATE (6:00 a.m.): Knoxville fire crews made significant headway overnight as they continued to fight a massive fire at the Fort Loudon Waste and Recycling Center in North Knoxville. The fire was considered contained as of 5 p.m. Wednesday, but there are still elements on the property that could potentially burn and is therefore not under control, according to Knoxville Fire Department spokesperson DJ Corcoran. [LINK](#)  
**Evacuations and road closures still in place as North Knoxville plant continues to burn** (WVLT-TV) Firefighters are using heavy equipment overnight and this morning to move debris as the fire continues to burn. Evacuations still in effect this morning. Road closures are still in place this morning as firefighters continue to work on the fire. Overnight fire crews were able to gain access to different parts of the fire to make progress on putting it out. They're using 1,000 gallons of water a minute. 5-6 blocks of street closed off surrounding area. [LINK](#)

**Neighbors considered site of North Knox fire a "health issue"** (WVLT-TV) Neighbors near a North Knox recycling center where a large fire broke out on Wednesday afternoon said they have complained about the facility before. The facility in question is the Fort Loudon Waste and Recycling Center located on Hancock St. in North Knox County. At around 1 p.m., a large fire broke out in what investigators said was a pile of trash. But neighbors said this is not the first time they have seen concerning situations at the center, and they're not surprised the fire occurred. "It's all cardboard, trash, paper, rubber, a lot of materials," one neighbor said. "They just bring them in and dump them." [LINK](#)

**Error-filled Knox County 'evacuate' text alert on fire offered more questions than answers**(News Sentinel) A text regarding the raging fire in North Knoxville from emergency authorities on Wednesday was sent with errors. Residents who signed up for the emergency alerts from the Knoxville-Knox County Emergency Management Agency got no help Wednesday as fire crews battled a raging fire in North Knoxville that produced smoke that could be seen for miles. "We did not send any messages," KEMA Director Colin Ickes said late Wednesday night in an email. [LINK](#)

## **OPINION**

**Guest column: ESAs let parents tailor education to each child's needs** (News Sentinel) Ien Gaugh's two boys have taught him a lot, including just how different two brothers can be. Take Elisha, his 12-year-old. The four walls of a traditional classroom weren't for him. "He was just bored," Glen says. "He was more interested in rushing through his work so he could read a book." The Gaughs pulled Elisha out of the district school. After nearly a year of homeschooling, Glen reports that Elisha is doing extremely well — and not just with school. Elisha is part of the local 4-H Club, and his beekeeping project received an award at a recent exhibit. [LINK](#)

**Guest column: Vaccines protect you, your family and your community** (Commercial Appeal) Pockets of our country are experiencing a significant uptick in the number of measles cases. Measles is not a harmless childhood illness. It is actually a highly contagious, dangerous disease that can even be deadly. But measles is also easily preventable with a vaccine. As the executive officer for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Region 4, which includes Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee, it's my job to raise awareness of facts that can help protect the health of all Americans. [LINK](#)

**Jay Greeson: Betting online gives Tennessee and Lee best chance to win** (Times Free Press) Game on. Rather, bet on. That's right, word came earlier this week that Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee stated that he will allow online sports betting legislation to become law without his signature. He did not support the idea during his campaign, and his Tennessee two-step now that public support is clear makes sense. It has to make all of us wonder what exactly ol' Billy truly is passionate about. Agricultural enhancements is too easy, right? Could he follow Georgia's recent decision to support Confederate monuments? Will he get neck deep into abortion discussions? [LINK](#)

**Roy Exum: Governor Lee: No To UAW** (Chattanooga) There is a rule at automobile assembly plants that is as old as Henry Ford, crediting with creating the assembly line, and every bit as hallowed as any of the Ten Commandments: Never, ever, stop the line. No reason is good enough to stop production of such magnitude but on Monday of this week, the line stopped at the Volkswagen Assembly Plant for the biggest threat in the industry – the union. [LINK](#)

**Column: If Texas Is To Keep Up With Tennessee, Lone Star State Lawmakers Will Need To Step It**

**Up** (Forbest) Tennessee Governor Bill Lee (R) has only been on the job for a little more than four months but the first legislative session of his administration, scheduled to end this week, is shaping up to be one filled with noteworthy policy achievements. The first bill signed into law by Governor Lee, HB 1138, was a tax cut that eliminated the state's "amusement tax". Tennessee's amusement tax, originally created in the 1980s, was a tax on membership fees or dues for recreation and sports facilities, ticket sales to sports events, and sports rental equipment (things like golf carts and bowling shoes). [LINK](#)

**Guest column: Legislators threaten voting rights in Volunteer State** (News Sentinel) President Lyndon Baines Johnson signed into law the Voting Rights Acts of 1965 with the intent of eliminating the legal barriers imposed at the state and local levels to prevent African Americans from exercising their legal right to vote as stated in the 15th Amendment. That amendment was ratified in 1870 and it guaranteed voting rights to all men regardless of race. It's important to note that women were not afforded the right to vote until the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920. [LINK](#)

**Jackson Baker: Harris' Shelby County Budget Likely to be Impacted by Vouchers** (Memphis Flyer) On Monday, Shelby County Mayor Lee Harris hastily scheduled an appearance before the Shelby County Commission to present an addition to the day's agenda — his proposed budget for fiscal 2020. Harris proposes to spend \$1.3 billion, including \$6 million for education programs, the largest such expenditure in the county's history. Paired with matching funds from various other sources, notably state and federal, the total educational outlays will be "well over \$10 million," Harris said. [LINK](#)

**Bill Freeman: Gov. Lee and Men of Valor: the 'Nashville Way' to criminal justice reform** (Nashville Scene) Criminal justice reform is getting a lot of attention from both liberal and conservative leaders seeking ways to deal with our history of over-incarceration and the billions of taxpayer dollars that history has cost. The financial cost, however, is increasingly being recognized as just part of why we need to institute reform — our system of punishment is costing more than that to our communities and our future generations. In Tennessee, Gov. Bill Lee has made reform one of his highest priorities, and we should applaud his commitment. [LINK](#)

**Guest column: 21 counties without an emergency room** (Elizabethton Star) Bill Lee has just celebrated 100 days as Governor. Truth is, there's not much to celebrate. Sure, every Saturday, Lee dresses up in his farm clothes and gives an update while attempting to be "relatable" to everyday Tennesseans. Here's the deal: Someone has to hold Governor Lee accountable for getting results. Immediately after the State of the State, Tennessee Citizen Action pointed out the facts: In Tennessee, everything that should be down is up and everything that should be up is down. Sadly, 100 days in, that's still true. Lee's first legislative session is near the end, and things are only getting worse. [LINK](#)

**Dan Conaway: Surely our governor has something better to do** (Daily Memphian) I recently read that the governor of Pennsylvania has named the hellbender the state's official amphibian. The hellbender is a 2-foot-long, nocturnal salamander also known as a "snot-nosed otter." Come on. Just seeing that name makes reading this column worthwhile. You're welcome. We already have an official state amphibian: the Tennessee cave salamander. That's a pity, because I looked it up hoping the position was open so Gov. Bill Lee could get right on it and better occupy his time. This whole school vouchers thing seems to be his No. 1 priority. Climbing around in Tennessee caves and digging in the mud for some creature to name the official state something or other has got to be cleaner than the mess he's made of this. [LINK](#)

**Erin Merrick**

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**From:** News Clips  
**Sent:** Friday, May 3, 2019 1:47 PM  
**To:** AE-Governors\_Staff  
**Subject:** The Tennessee Journal - May 3, 2019  
**Attachments:** 19tnj18.pdf

See attached for this week's TN Journal.

# The Tennessee Journal

The weekly insiders newsletter on Tennessee government, politics, and business

Vol. 45, No. 18

May 3, 2019

## General Assembly adjourns after chaotic episode in the House

Frustrated by Republican leadership's largely successful attempts to marginalize them this year, House Democrats seized on the dwindling number of GOP members attending the last day of session by staging a walkout to deprive the chamber of a quorum.

If successful, the move could have thrown a monkey wrench into efforts to pass several pending pieces of legislation, including a bill to require Republican Gov. Bill Lee to try to negotiate a Medicaid block grant waiver from the federal government.

Republican leadership caught wind of the ploy and instructed the chamber's doors be locked to prevent Democrats from leaving, creating a chaotic scene in which several members tried to push their way past state troopers and sergeants-at-arms to get out.

Republicans pointed to House rules that allow the speaker to retrieve members, while Democrats noted the move to block their exit was made while the chamber was technically in recess. There was much shouting and name-calling.

Eventually a quorum call was held, and the bare minimum of 66 members signaled they were in attendance, including three Democrats who have allied themselves with House Speaker Glen Casada (R-Franklin): Reps. John Deberry of Memphis, John Mark Windle of Livingston, and Johnny Shaw of Bolivar.

With that exercise concluded, the remaining Democrats returned to the chamber. But that wasn't the end of the flare-ups, as Republican Rep. Ryan Williams of Cookeville and Democratic Rep. Antonio Parkinson of Memphis appeared to come close to blows.

Majority Leader William Lamberth (R-Portland) had suggested Parkinson apologize to Williams for making him return to the chamber for the quorum call and likely missing his daughter's dance recital. Parkinson refused, arguing he and fellow Democrats were the ones who deserved an apology for not being allowed to leave the chamber. Lamberth ultimately brokered an uneasy peace between the angry lawmakers.

Republican leaders were furious about the stunt, but only had themselves to blame. The GOP holds a super-

majority, which is walkout-proof as long as their members are present. But eight Republicans had already been excused for the day, and several more were eyeing the exits as the session dragged on into the evening.

The episode flew in the face of Casada's efforts to instill a greater decorum in the House — a move that has been denounced by Democrats as a thinly-veiled attempt to quash dissent within the chamber. The walkout came in response to Casada excluding Democrats from conference committees, a move the speaker defended as being similar to his experience when Republicans were in the minority.

The chamber ultimately concluded its business, but for many members it couldn't have come soon enough.

### Legislative roundup

#### **Lawmakers approve school voucher compromise, strike budget deal**

When Gov. Bill Lee's school voucher bill was on the verge of falling one vote short in the House last week, House Speaker Glen Casada kept the voting machine open for 40 minutes to persuade a single member to become the crucial 50th green light on the board to keep the measure alive.

A competing version went on to pass in the Senate, and a conference committee was formed to hammer out differences. When the compromise measure came up for a floor vote Wednesday, Casada waited only 13 seconds before barking at the clerk to "close it" before any wavering members had a chance to change their minds.

This time the Education Savings Account, or ESA, bill got 51 votes. The Senate later followed suit by approving the measure 19-14 and sending it to the governor's desk. Lee said he looks forward to signing the bill into law.

As enacted, families in the Metro Nashville and Shelby County school districts earning up to 2.6 times the federal poverty level will be eligible for the program offering debit cards worth \$7,376 — the equivalent of the average amount provided per student under the state's school funding formula — to spend on expenses related to private school education.

**Strategic retreats.** The ESA bill threatened to go off the rails at several points between its introduction in March and its final approval this week, but heavy revisions — many of which were focused on assuring wary rural lawmakers that vouchers would not be offered in their home districts — kept it moving along.

The original version allowed for the possibility of expanding the program beyond the state's four largest counties if a district ended up with at least three schools ranked among the worst 10% in the state. That was a nonstarter for lawmakers who could foresee their districts falling into that category in the future.

In response, sponsors tailored the bill to limit it to the state's four largest counties. But that still didn't capture the support of enough GOP lawmakers from Knox and Hamilton, who demanded their counties be excluded in exchange for their votes. That group included Rep. Jason Zachary of Knoxville, who changed his vote during the 40-minute delay to put the bill over the top in the House, and Chattanooga Sens. Bo Watson and Todd Gardenhire, without whose votes the bill would have died in the Senate Finance Committee.

Lawmakers felt so strongly about the bill's geographical limitations that they included a provision to void the entire program if a judge were to rule that vouchers have to be offered beyond the two districts envisioned under the law.

The original version of the bill would have set the income limits at 3.7 times of the federal poverty guidelines, or about \$109,000 for a family of five. That led to complaints the program wasn't really targeted at the poorest students, so Lee agreed to drop those thresholds by 30%, or to \$76,500 for a family of the same size.

Initially, the income check would have occurred only upon making the first application to the program, meaning a young family could have qualified before potentially earning far more in later years and never need to relinquish the voucher. Under the compromise approved this week, families will have to re-verify they remain under the income limits each year.

Other major changes included removing home-schoolers, dialing back the maximum enrollment from 30,000 to 15,000 students, and declaring that children will have to drop out of the ESA program if they move out of the county in which they first receive it. Originally, the vouchers would have been portable statewide.

**Immigration infatuation.** House members were particularly worried about voting for the bill if it could have been claimed the program could be taken up by children living in the United States without legal authorization. All this despite a long-standing U.S. Supreme Court ruling requiring states to provide access to K-12 education regardless of students' immigration status (and the fact that lawmakers had unanimously voted for a state budget including \$6.5 billion for public education, which is available to undocumented children).

The bill as passed includes language declaring the ESA program not to be "a public benefit," which proponents argue will protect it from a legal challenge over the

immigration checks. But they're not confident enough in their analysis not to include yet another severability clause to say the remaining parts of the measure would remain law if the immigration checks are thrown out.

**Attaching the siphon.** The Senate ultimately agreed to a push by the House to redirect any unused portions of the \$25 million Lee had dedicated toward reimbursing affected districts for lost enrollment. The final version sends a portion to other districts with at least one failing school to spend as they see fit.

Sponsors noted ESA enrollment is expected to fall well below the annual maximums set by the legislation — 5,000 in the first year and growing by 2,500 students in ensuing years. Under the most recent failing school list, the excess money would flow to districts in Campbell, Fayette, Hamilton, Madison, and Maury counties. After the initial three years, Metro Nashville and Shelby County schools would be eligible, too.

**Big win for Lee.** The shifting sands on the substance of the proposal quickly made it clear the Lee administration wasn't as intent on passing a sweeping bill as it was on getting a win on voucher legislation when so many earlier attempts under his predecessors had failed. Given the decision by the new governor to set out on the perilous course of pursuing voucher legislation in his first year, it could have been politically disastrous for the bill not to pass.

The bill's final form was significantly watered down from where it started. But Lee's refusal to detail specific goals for a voucher program when he was running for office means he can't now be accused of falling short of campaign promises with the final outcome.

**Budget battle.** While much of the session was dominated by the debate over Gov. Bill Lee's more than \$25 million per year school voucher proposal, the House and Senate this week tacked on two measures that will cost the state double that total moving forward.

Under a compromise struck by the two chambers, Tennessee will dedicate \$27 million a year toward a Medicaid waiver for children with disabilities whose families wouldn't otherwise meet income requirements. The state will also forgo \$22 million in revenues through the elimination of the professional privilege tax for most of the job categories required to pay it.

The Senate balked at using new online sales tax revenues to pay for the waiver named after Katie Beckett, an Iowa girl whose case inspired President Ronald Reagan to change Medicaid rules in 1981. The state will instead draw from other revenues to pay for the waiver covering an estimated 3,000 children.

The online sales tax money will instead be dedicated to getting rid of the annual professional privilege tax for 15 of the 22 professions that are required to pay it. Not affected by the cut: brokers (many of whom are based out-of-state), doctors, lawyers, and lobbyists. The annual tax was \$200 for most of its existence, but was boosted to \$400 to help balance the books in the aftermath of the failed income tax proposal of 2002.

# Tennessee News Digest

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● Seven people found dead in two locations in rural Sumner County were killed by blunt force trauma, according to the medical examiner's office. Police have identified 25-year-old Michael Cummins as the suspect in the slayings. The Tennessee Bureau of Investigation said it was the largest number of homicide victims since Paul Reid Jr. killed seven fast-food workers during a spree of violence in Nashville and Clarksville in 1997.

● The University of Tennessee's board of trustees approved Donde Plowman of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln as chancellor of the system's flagship campus in Knoxville. She starts July 1.

● Oak Ridge National Laboratory and the University of Maine have struck a \$20 million agreement to work on 3D printing using wood-based products.

● Former president George W. Bush is scheduled to keynote an Athens Area

Chamber of Commerce fundraiser on June 22. Proceeds will go toward rebuilding the Chamber's offices, which were destroyed in a fire last year.

● *The Tennessean* has moved out of the downtown building it once shared with the defunct *Nashville Banner*. Reporters and editors will begin working out of new office space near Vanderbilt University on Monday. The paper is now printed on the *Knoxville News Sentinel's* presses.

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## Legislative superlatives

### They're all winners in our book: Here are your 2019 session awards

The judges have decided the winners of this year's coveted *Tennessee Journal* legislative awards. They are:

**Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde Award.** Firebrand Rep. Andy Holt (R-Dresden) defied expectations by running the House Finance Subcommittee in a calm and professional manner while reserving his customary outbursts and denunciations for floor debates about bills about gambling and alcohol.

**Kanye West Mic-Grabbing Award.** House Minority Leader Karen Camper (D-Memphis) caught Speaker Glen Casada off guard when she grabbed his microphone at the podium to voice objections to efforts to cut off debate over a Medicaid block grant bill, causing him to gavel her out of order from close range. She later apologized for getting caught up in the moment.

**Get Used To It Award.** Freshman Rep. Bruce Griffey (R-Paris) was outraged when his proposal to allow more bingo gambling died in a subcommittee in February. Matters weren't helped when his wife, a state Republican Party Executive Committee member, posted the chairman's mobile phone number on social media for people to call and vent their anger. Griffey, who sponsored a slew of anti-immigration measures, ended up seeing all 13 of his bills defeated this year.

**Swift Retribution Award.** When Rep. Matthew Hill (R-Jonesborough) claimed during a floor debate that the Tennessee State Employees Association was supporting Gov. Bill Lee's voucher bill, it came as a surprise to the group's executive director, Randy Stamps, who quickly took to Twitter to state the group had only said it wouldn't hold a pro-voucher vote against its allies. Stamps deleted the tweet, but Hill didn't take kindly to the public comeuppance. Within a week, the group's signature legislative initiative to restore longevity pay for executive branch workers hired since 2015, a bill cosponsored by Hill and which had been making steady progress in the House, was dead for the year.

**Count Von Count Award.** It may not have been the most soaring oratory, but it certainly stood out during the school voucher debate when freshman Rep. Robin Smith (R-Chattanooga) ever so slowly counted from one to 18 to illustrate how many years some Hamilton County schools have been failing.

**Byrd Dropping Award.** House Speaker Glen Casada finally came to the conclusion that Rep. David Byrd (R-Waynesboro) should no longer be the chairman of an education subcommittee amid a drumbeat of protests about allegations of sexual abuse against the lawmaker dating back to when he was a high school basketball coach in the 1980s. Never mind Casada could have avoided most of the trouble by not naming Byrd to lead the panel to begin with.

**He Doth Protest Too Much Award.** Republican Sen. Brian Kelsey earned the sobriquet "The Stuntbaby of Germantown" more than a decade ago for acts like placing strips of bacon in an envelope on the House floor to protest what he called pork spending projects approved by the Democratic majority. When the *Daily Memphian's* Sam Stockard inquired last week whether a \$2.5 million earmark for the Germantown Performing Arts Center was a reward for his support for other legislation, Kelsey called it a "highly offensive question." Where's that bacon envelope when you need it?

**Freshman Lawmaker of the Year.** Newly-elected Rep. Kirk Haston (R-Lobelville) knows a bit about pressure from his time as a college basketball player under legendary Indiana coach Bob Knight. Haston was thrown into the deep end early in the session when he was handed the gavel from Education Chairman Mark White (R-Memphis), the sponsor of a controversial administration bill to create an independent charter school authorizer. Haston opposed the bill, but presided over the committee debate with aplomb.

**Most Surprising Bill Passed.** It took nearly two decades for former state Sen. Steve Cohen (D-Memphis) to get a constitutional amendment to authorize the Tennessee Lottery on the ballot. But, less than a year after an enabling U.S. Supreme Court decision, state lawmakers have approved online sports gambling in Tennessee, despite opposition from the governor, a sexual misconduct complaint against House sponsor Rick Staples (D-Knoxville), and a federal fraud lawsuit against Senate sponsor Steve Dickerson (R-Nashville). Lee will allow it to become law without his signature.

**Lobbying Effort of the Year.** Kent Starwalt of the Road Builders Association somehow persuaded skeptical lawmakers to make Tennessee the 19th state to ban hand-held mobile phones while driving. Not a bad result in a body that just last year rejected efforts to ban smoking inside vehicles carrying young children.

## Tennessee Notes & Quotes

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■ WTVF-TV's **Phil Williams** reported House Speaker **Glen Casada's** chief of staff, **Cade Cothren**, may have tampered with evidence to frame activist **Justin Jones** and that he sent text messages including racial slurs. Casada (R-Franklin) called the allegations "blatantly false." Nashville District Attorney **Glenn Funk** has turned the case over to a special prosecutor.

■ Former U.S. Sen. **Bob Corker** (R-Chattanooga) told *Knoxville News Sentinel* contributor **Georgiana Vines** he would become a candidate for president next year only if there was "an actual path to victory."

■ "Today, it doesn't feel that's the case. I'm a very realistic person." — **Corker**.

■ Associated Press reporter **Kimberlee Kruesi** found only nine of 23 department heads in Gov. **Bill Lee's** Cabinet submitted resumes or cover letters for their jobs. Education Commissioner **Penny Schwinn** and TennCare Director **Gabe Roberts** were among those turning in no paperwork before being hired. The AP review of more than 1,400 applications revealed several unsuccessful aspirants for positions, including AT&T Tennessee President **Joelle Phillips**, former state Rep. **Judd Matheny** (R-Tullahoma), and former FedEx Freight President **Mike Ducker**.

■ "I don't see where sharing articles about [Islamic law] or third time deported people coming in and committing crimes would prejudice my ability to be fair and impartial in any case." — *Shelby County Criminal Judge Jim Lammey to the Commercial Appeal about anti-immigration posts to his Facebook page.*

■ A lunch spread was set out for lawmakers in front of Gov. **Bill Lee's** office in the Capitol just as the House had narrowly approved the compromise version of his controversial school voucher bill on Wednesday. Both supporters and opponents of the measure went downstairs to partake in the free food.

■ "The governor shook my hand, but when he figured out who I was, he took one of my cookies." — *Rep. Bob Ramsey (R-Maryville), who voted against the bill.*

■ **Lee** in an end-of-session press conference pledged not to veto any bills this year.

■ U.S. Rep. **Steve Cohen** (D-Memphis) brought a bucket of fried chicken to a Judiciary Committee meeting that Attorney General **William Barr** declined to appear before after receiving a grilling in the Senate.

■ "The attorney general is here!" — **Cohen**, who also brought a chicken figurine to drive home the point.

■ Tennessean **TJ Ducklo** has been named national press secretary for former Vice President **Joe Biden's** presidential campaign. Ducklo graduated from the University School of Nashville and was an intern for the Tennessee Association of Broadcasters in 2009.

■ **Krystal Knight**, the executive director of Emerge Tennessee, is joining the Democratic Super PAC Priorities USA as its national political director. She will remain in Nashville and serve on the board of her previ-

ous organization, which recruits female candidates to run for office as Democrats.

■ U.S. Rep. **Mark Green** (R-Ashland City) filed a privileged resolution seeking to force a floor vote on a measure referring testimony from former **Trump** lawyer **Michael Cohen** to the Justice Department for a perjury investigation. Democrats tabled the motion.

■ "They've now suggested you can lie to Congress as long as testimony tries to hurt **Trump**. Democrats have just endorsed a two-tiered system of justice." — **Green**.

■ Former Gov. **Bill Haslam** and **Green** were commencement speakers at Austin Peay State University on Friday. Both are mulling bids to succeed U.S. Sen. **Lamar Alexander** (R-Maryville) next year.

■ The daughter of **Sedley Alley**, a man executed in 2006 after being convicted of murdering a 19-year-old Marine, asked a Memphis judge to authorize DNA testing of evidence from the case.

■ **Alley's** case became a factor in the 1996 campaign against state Supreme Court Justice **Penny White**, the only high court member to lose a retention election in state history, as being soft on crime. Critics included the parents of the murdered Marine, **Suzanne Collins**. They argued White's decision as an appeals judge to grant Alley a new hearing because the original judge had joked about the death penalty had caused a four-year delay in the case.

■ "It's a true story. I'm telling the truth this time!" — *State Sen. Frank Niceley (R-Strawberry Plains) recounting an anecdote during a floor debate.*

■ A group of parents protested against Republican U.S. Sen. **Lamar Alexander** in his hometown of Maryville for his support for mandatory vaccinations.

■ "I just don't want politicians telling me what we can [do] to our bodies and our children's bodies. I feel like I am in North Korea." — *Parent Deborah Reese to the Maryville Daily Times.*

■ The freshman class in the state Senate put on its annual "Greenhorn Caucus" presentation in the waning hours of the legislative session. Sen. **Raumesh Akbari** (D-Memphis) was the unquestioned star of the event with her impressions of a Diet Coke-swilling Sen. **Jeff Yarbro** (D-Nashville) and oversized bow tie-wearing Sen. **Bo Watson** (R-Chattanooga).

■ Gov. **Bill Lee** was booed during a speech to Volkswagen workers at the German automaker's plant in Chattanooga when he made comments perceived as urging them not to vote for representation by the United Auto Workers union. Reporters were not informed of Lee's visit to the plant beforehand.

■ Several parking spaces on the street between the Cordell Hull building and the Capitol that were once assigned to Attorney General **Herbert Slatery's** office have been reserved for the House and Senate speakers.

■ Maybe **Slatery** traded the spots in return for not having to write legal opinions for lawmakers anymore?



**From:** News Clips  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2019 7:26 AM  
**To:** AE-Governors\_Staff  
**Subject:** Daily News Clips - May 6

## Monday, May 6

**Gov. Lee delivers commencement speech at Bryan College (WRCB-TV)** Tennessee Governor Bill Lee delivered the commencement speech at Bryan College Saturday. More than 130 graduates walked across the stage. The ceremony took place on the Triangle Lawn at the Dayton campus. Governor Lee talked about many topics in his speech, but one of the things he stressed to the students the most was the importance of serving others. "You can't control a lot of the things that will happen, the circumstances that will come at you, good and bad," Gov. Lee told the graduates. "And if we will commit ourselves to serving because at the end of the day, that's what He's called us to do is to serve. If we can commit ourselves to serving then He will take all of those experiences and use them to bless us and to bless others." [LINK](#)

**2019 Lincoln Day Dinner...Carter County Republican Party to host Lee as guest speaker(Elizabethton Star)** Excitement is starting to escalate as the Carter County Republican Party is in the final preparation stages to host their Lincoln Day Dinner at Milligan College's Sutton Hall on Thursday, May 16. This year's special speaker will be Governor Bill Lee, who made numerous stops in Carter County while on the campaign trail seeking the office he currently holds. "He is just a wonderful man," said Judy Reed, who is the Vice Chairwoman of the county's Republican Party. [LINK](#)

**Gov. Lee to serve as guest speaker at Lincoln Day Dinner in Carter Co. (WJHL-TV)** Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee will serve as the guest speaker for this year's Lincoln Day Dinner. Gov. Lee will speak to guests Thursday, May 16, at Milligan College for the annual event, sponsored by the Carter County Republican Party. Doors are open at 6 p.m. for general seating. You can learn more about the event by visiting the Carter County Republican Women Facebook page. [LINK](#)

**Lee says nonprofit work is answer to problems government can't fix (Tennessean)** A day after the legislative session concluded, Gov. Bill Lee returned to his home county to express gratitude for what the nonprofit world could do rather than government. Lee spoke at the One Generation Away breakfast on Friday morning, after meeting the co-founders of the Franklin nonprofit on the campaign trail for governor. The organization consistently makes the effort to retrieve extra food from restaurants and grocery stores and redirect that food to those in need in Williamson County and Middle Tennessee. [LINK](#)

**The Tri-Star State: School Vouchers, Block Grants And Other Big GOP Wins Of 2019 (WPLN Radio)** This year's legislative session has come to an end, and a new wave of Tennessee Republicans scored some big wins during the last couple of weeks. The following are excerpts from recent interviews: Gov. Bill Lee on the negotiations needed to get his signature legislation — Education Savings Accounts, or school vouchers — approved by the Tennessee General Assembly: "There's agreement, there's conversation and then there's a final resolution and that's what we did. And I'm excited about it. I'm grateful that we got it done. The children of Tennessee, particularly those who are going to qualify for this program, are going to have access to a high-quality education that they didn't have access to before." [LINK](#)

**Governor Bill Lee likely to sign school voucher bill soon (WMC-TV)** Tennessee Governor Bill Lee is expected to sign a controversial voucher bill that the General Assembly approved last week. It's a major victory for the governor, but potential legal challenges loom. The program will provide taxpayer money to low-income families to help send their kids to private schools. State Senator Brian Kelsey introduced the bill. "We've got

thousands of children in Shelby County who are low income, who are trapped in failing schools year after year. This will finally give them the chance to go to a quality school,” said Kelsey. [LINK](#)

**State Tax Revenues Are Higher Than Ever, But Good Times May Not Last** (Governing) States’ purchasing power has never been better, but there are signs that the upswing is waning. A record 41 states collected more revenue last year than they did before the 2008 recession, even when inflation is taken into account. And in many cases, the recovery is significant. In 16 states, tax revenue was at least 15 percent higher in the third quarter of 2018 than their last peaks. The findings come from the latest analysis of state revenues by the Pew Charitable Trusts. Collectively, states during the third quarter of last year had the equivalent of 13.4 cents more in purchasing power for every \$1 they collected at their recession-era peak. [LINK](#)

**Tennessee’s three Catholic bishops call on Gov. Bill Lee to stop 2019 executions**(Tennessean) The three Catholic bishops in Tennessee are calling on Gov. Bill Lee to spare death row inmate Donnie Johnson’s life and stop all other executions scheduled this year. Nashville Bishop J. Mark Spalding, Knoxville Bishop Richard F. Stika and Memphis Bishop David P. Talley penned a joint letter to the governor on April 23 and the Nashville diocese published it Friday. “We urge you to use your authority as governor to put an end to the fast-track executions planned for later this year, and particularly the execution of Donnie Johnson scheduled for May 16. As you know, he was convicted of the brutal murder of his wife, but even their daughter has spoken against his execution,” the letter states. [LINK](#)

**How more than a decade’s worth of visits to a death row inmate forever changed this Tennessee family** (Tennessean) Caleb Dysinger was about 1 when he visited death row for the first time. It never seemed strange or scary to him that the man he called Uncle Don lived there ... The Dysingers don’t dispute the fact that Johnson committed a terrible crime. Johnson himself no longer contests his guilt. But the family says his transformation behind bars makes him an ideal candidate for the governor’s mercy. [LINK](#)

**TN parents concerned about Measles outbreak; state disconnects hotline after 400 calls**(WSMV-TV) In the middle of the largest measles outbreak in decades, Tennessee is shutting down one of its most useful tools. The measles hotline is disconnected, which anyone could use if they have questions about the virus. For the last six weeks, anyone with a question about the measles has been able to call a state hotline with any and all questions. That was until Friday. With it being on so many minds this week, we wanted to find out for you what you can do to keep your kids safe. [LINK](#)

**Clay County is ranked No. 1 in Tennessee for dispensing opioids. Now the feds are involved.** (Tennessean) A woman driving a car with Kentucky plates pulled into a pharmacy parking lot to fill her prescription, when Clay County Sheriff Brandon Boone told her she’d have to come back another day — the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration was raiding the place and rounding up its inventory of controlled substances. Then she said something the sheriff won’t forget. “She said, ‘This is the only pharmacy that will fill my prescription,’” Boone said. “If any (other) pharmacy won’t fill that prescription, there’s a problem there.” [LINK](#)

**Five things to know about online gambling in Tennessee** (Tennessean) This week, the Tennessee legislature passed a bill to legalize online sports betting. Here are five things to know about the legalization: Sen. Steve Dickerson, R-Nashville and Rep. Rick Staples, D-Knoxville, introduced the bill to allow online gambling. The legislation prohibits physical sites for placing bets. The bill passed the Senate on a vote of 19-12. It passed the House 58-37, then some Senate amendments passed the House as well. Gov. Bill Lee is opposed to the legalization of gambling but will allow the legislation to pass anyway. [LINK](#)

**Voter signup groups say Tennessee penalties change landscape** (AP) Facing the possibility of fines for paperwork errors, organizers of voter registration drives and civil rights advocates are furious over a new Tennessee law that they said discourages them from getting minorities and college students to take part in American democracy. They call the new law, likely the first in the country to fine groups for too many incomplete registration forms, an affront to one of the most basic civil rights enjoyed by Americans. But some also say they won’t let it turn them around. [LINK](#)

**Bill extending statute of limitations on child sexual abuse crimes likely to become law**(Tennessean) A bill that would extend the statute of limitations on child sexual abuse crimes in Tennessee is headed to the

governor's desk. The Tennessee General Assembly passed the legislation Thursday, the final day of this year's legislative session. It is expected to become law since Gov. Bill Lee said Thursday evening during a news conference that he has no plans to veto any bills that made it out of the state legislature. [LINK](#)

**New Tennessee Law Offers Some Caregivers Alternatives To Jail Time** (WPLN Radio) Tennessee has a new law to help families stay together when a parent faces incarceration. The legislation, known as the Primary Caregiver Bill, requires courts to consider options for keeping a parent with their children. Jawharrah Bahar was in prison for 3 1/2 years, while her family cared for her three children. The impact of incarceration on her kids, she says, is undeniable more than five years later. "I am still, to this day, building a relationship back with them because they don't trust me," Bahar says. [LINK](#)

**Why TVA might store coal ash for decades near Nashville, but will remove it from former Memphis plant** (Tennessean) More than a decade after the devastating Kingston coal ash spill, the Tennessee Valley Authority is studying how to dispose of the hazardous material at the Gallatin Fossil Plant near Nashville and the former Allen Fossil Plant in Memphis. While each of the two sites are keeping tons of coal ash near drinking water sources, the options for disposal differ in a fundamental way: In Memphis, TVA has ruled out storing the ash on site; at Gallatin, the utility is still considering long-term storage. [LINK](#)

**Tennessee's Struggling Rural Hospitals Seek Outside Help To Restructure** (WPLN Radio) Many rural hospitals across Tennessee are about to get some outside advice on how to restructure. The state has launched a program to help rural hospitals hire outside consultants, after approving \$1 million a year as part of the Rural Hospital Transformation Act. The law passed in 2018 was a response to the 11 rural hospitals that have closed in recent years due to demographic shifts and policy decisions, such as rejecting Medicaid expansion. Nationally, one in five rural hospitals is at risk of closure. [LINK](#)

#### **OPINION**

**Bob Rolfe: VW doesn't need UAW presence** (Times Free Press) As a lifelong Tennessean, I'm privileged to know firsthand that our state is an incredible place to live, work and raise a family. And as commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development, it's an honor to have the opportunity to market my home state to companies around the world. Because of our business-friendly environment, Tennessee is a leading place for foreign direct investment (FDI). More than 1,000 foreign-based establishments operate in Tennessee and provide thousands of Tennesseans with high quality jobs. [LINK](#)

**Guest Column: Lee, Volkswagen only hurting workers** (Times Free Press) In an extraordinary act of coercion, Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee led an anti-union meeting last Monday at Chattanooga's Volkswagen plant. All of the plant's day shift employees were required to attend, but the broader public was shut out. No other politicians were invited and journalists were not allowed in the building. Audio of the meeting, obtained by Labor Notes, reveals the most powerful politician in the state throwing his support behind Volkswagen management and against the plant's workers. [LINK](#)

**Column: Bounds edges closer to Dunn challenge** (KnoxTNToday) Patti Bounds is back from Nashville and she's mad. In a blog post Sunday, the Knox County school board member wrote, "I have worked tirelessly to defeat the Charter Authorization bill and the Education Savings Account bill (better known as educational vouchers) at the state level. I have called, emailed, texted and made visits to the Capitol. Unfortunately, both of these bills were passed by a legislature that succumbed to bribery, promises and gifts in exchange for votes." She further charged that legislators lacked understanding of the bills and an accurate description of their financial costs to taxpayers. Bounds said she is "prayerfully considering" running for the legislative seat held for the past 25 years by Bill Dunn, the primary sponsor of the voucher bill in the House. [LINK](#)

**From:** News Clips  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 7, 2019 7:20 AM  
**To:** AE-Governors\_Staff  
**Subject:** Daily News Clips - May 7

## Tuesday, May 7

**U.S. Secretary of Energy Rick Perry to unveil 'major computing announcement' at ORNL summit (WBIR-TV)**  
U.S. Energy Secretary Rick Perry and **Governor Bill Lee** will attend the Innovation XLab Advanced Manufacturing Summit in Oak Ridge this Tuesday, May 7. According to the Department of Energy, Perry is expected to unveil "a major computing announcement." No word from the DOE on what that announcement is yet. Perry and other DOE leaders will also tour the lab exhibits, facilities and technology. A news release from the Innovation XLab Advanced Manufacturing Summit states attendees "hope to explore new solutions to manufacturing challenges and opportunities." [LINK](#)

**Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos praises Tennessee's recently passed school voucher bill (Times free Press)**  
U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos praised Tennessee's recently passed school voucher bill while addressing a room full of education reporters in Baltimore Monday. Last week, lawmakers passed Gov. Bill Lee's controversial school education savings account plan, which would give taxpayer money to families to pay for private school or alternative school tuition and other education-related costs. "The [Tennessee voucher] program is going to really benefit students and families who haven't been able to make choices before," DeVos said. [LINK](#)

**Betsy DeVos praises Tennessee voucher program (Daily Memphian)**  
While addressing education reporters from around the nation, U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos said she was "thrilled" Tennessee has passed a voucher program, and that it is up to the state to work out whether immigrant and undocumented students qualify for it. DeVos' talk on Monday at the Education Writers Association national conference in Baltimore comes less than a week after Tennessee lawmakers passed a major voucher bill, creating an education savings account program that will give taxpayer money to eligible families to pay for private school tuition or related education services. [LINK](#)

**Betsy DeVos praises Tennessee's voucher program, but won't say whether undocumented immigrants should be excluded (Chalkbeat Tennessee)**  
While addressing education reporters from around the nation, U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos said she was "thrilled" Tennessee has passed a voucher program, and that it is up to the state to work out if immigrant and undocumented students qualify for it. DeVos' talk on Monday at the Education Writers Association national conference in Baltimore comes less than a week after Tennessee lawmakers passed a major voucher bill, creating an education savings account program that will give taxpayer money to eligible families to pay for private school tuition or related education services. [LINK](#)

**After passage, independent schools ponder the future of ESAs (WTVF-TV)**  
Davidson counties dozens of independent schools now have to make a decision whether or not they'll decide to accept state money from the Education Savings Account program. ESAs passed through the state legislature last week and the bill is expected to be signed soon by Governor Bill Lee. It would offer \$7,300 to students in the lowest performing school districts in the state for families that fall within the income specifications. The program mainly applies to Davidson and Shelby counties. However, many Nashville independent schools have tuition well above the \$7,300 supplied by the program. For example, Ensworth School has a high school tuition of \$31,980. [LINK](#)

**A Tennessee Waltz toasts tradition, celebrates state's history (Tennessean)**  
The Tennessee State Museum's annual black-tie benefit, A Tennessee Waltz, held at the State Capitol, not only marked 27 years of the preservation and celebration of our state's history, but also the first waltz under Tennessee's 50th governor.

Gov. Bill Lee attended the gala with first lady Maria Lee, along with Tennessee State Museum Foundation chairman Dr. Paul McCombs and gala chair Pat Kerr Tigrett, among an eclectic mix of political dignitaries and notable Tennesseans from the arts and entertainment industries. [LINK](#)

**Tennessee Correctional Professionals Week underway in the mid-state** (WTVF-TV) ... Tennessee correctional officers have been among the worst paid state prison workers in the country, leading to a high about of turnover. Currently, there are 633 correctional officer vacancies in the department. A total of 54% of correctional officers left their jobs in the last fiscal year. However, Governor Bill Lee has approved pay increases for correctional officers and counselors starting on July 1. The starting salary will increase to \$32,500. [LINK](#)

**Medicaid block grants move forward in Tennessee** (Axios) Tennessee is plowing ahead with its plan to become the first state to adopt Medicaid block grants, but there's no guarantee that the Trump administration will end up playing along. Driving the news: The state legislature on Friday passed a bill authorizing the new financing structure, and Republican Gov. Bill Lee is expected to sign it. [LINK](#)

**Tennessee To Seek Controversial Medicaid Block Grant Waiver In Move That Will Test How Far CMS Is Willing To Go** (Kaiser Health News/Politico) Tennessee is charging ahead to become the first state in the nation to ask the Trump administration for Medicaid funding in a lump sum — a radical overhaul of the entitlement program that critics warn could force major cutbacks in health coverage for low-income people. State Republican lawmakers on Thursday, emboldened by the Trump administration's promise to provide states with more flexibility to run their Medicaid programs, approved legislation requiring Tennessee to submit a Medicaid block grant plan to the federal government within six months. The legislation now goes to Republican Gov. Bill Lee, who will sign the bill, a spokesperson said. [LINK](#)

**Moms Demand Action wants Gov. Lee to veto gun permit legislation** (WJHL-TV) A group of Tennessee moms wants Gov. Bill Lee to veto recently passed legislation that would make it easier to get a handgun carry permit. If the bill becomes law, Tennesseans would be allowed to obtain a permit by completing at least 90 minutes of online training. Under existing law, training that involves actually firing a gun is required. The bill's sponsor said the current permit requirements are too time-consuming. [LINK](#)

**Local lawmakers discuss school voucher legislation** (WJHL-TV) Local lawmakers discuss controversial school voucher legislation after the end of the 2019 session. It took a final vote on the Senate floor to send the Education Saving Account, also called the Voucher Bill, to Governor Bill Lee's desk. Representative Matthew Hill wasn't sure about the Governor's first proposal. "The Governor purposed his original ESA legislation, and I saw that it had the potential to be financially detrimental to our county and city school systems." So, instead, Hill proposing an amendment that the bill would only apply to specific counties. [LINK](#)

**New UT-Knoxville chancellor Donde Plowman a 'big athletics fan'** (News Sentinel) Tennessee athletics gained a self-proclaimed "big athletics fan" on Monday afternoon. The University of Tennessee-Knoxville introduced its new chancellor, Donde Plowman, who discussed subjects ranging from her leadership style to the importance of diversity. She also touched on athletics, expressing a love of going to as many sporting events as possible. "I think athletics can be a real strength for a university," Plowman said. "I think it is for this university. It is a strength at other big universities I am familiar with, like Nebraska. I think that student-athletes are an important part of our campus, and I will always be supportive of all students, including student-athletes." [LINK](#)

**UT Knoxville's new boss makes first visit to campus, following job offer** (WATE-TV) The University of Tennessee Knoxville's new boss stopped by campus Monday. The UT Board of Trustees voted unanimously Friday to approve President Randy Boyd's appointment, naming Plowman UTK's ninth chancellor. Plowman, set to take the helm July 1, is no stranger to campus. She previously worked as a department leader in management, in the Haslam College of Business. She credited her time at the University, nearly a decade ago, to her success in higher education. [LINK](#)

**U of M looks to create 'destination campus' with \$12M in dining hall improvements** (Memphis Business Journal) In a world of Grubhub and Uber Eats, the traditional college dining hall — limited hours, a set number of choices — may be at a slight disadvantage. But, the University of Memphis is hoping to level the playing

field — and, in doing so, to go from being a ‘commuter campus’ to a ‘destination campus.’ In April, the U of M awarded a new, 15-year food service contract to Chartwells Higher Ed. That contract replaces a more than 20-year partnership with Aramark and came after a lengthy competitive bidding process. [LINK](#)

**Tennessee Highway Patrol trooper killed in Madison Co. crash** (WTVF-TV) A Tennessee Highway Patrol Trooper was killed in a crash in Madison County. THP officials say Trooper Matthew Gatti died in the crash Monday night. According to WREG NewsChannel 3, Gatti’s cruiser was hit by an 18-wheeler while responding to a call. Gatti was a trooper of the Memphis THP district. THP officials said his death was a “heartbreaking loss.” Our hearts are filled with much grief and sadness. [LINK](#)

**Victims of violence can register to conceal their information from public records** (WMC-TV) Victims of domestic violence, human trafficking and other sex-related crimes can now conceal their identities from public records in the state of Tennessee. Secretary of State Tre Hargett has launched a new program called “Safe at Home.” It shields survivors and victims from ongoing threats of violence. “What we’re trying to do is to create a system where there is one less point of vulnerability whether it’s stalking domestic violence, whatever it is to be able to protect their address so they don’t have to have that point of vulnerability,” said Hargett. [LINK](#)

**Tennessee moves WIC Program to debit-like cards** (WDEF-TV) Tennessee is updating some of their social aid programs to the 21st century. The Tennessee Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program is moving from paper-based payments to electronic transfers. The means that people who need the public assistance will no longer have to produce a printed out card. Instead, they will get a debit card with benefits already loaded on it. That will make it easier on them to use. And it should also be faster for those of us in line behind them at grocery stores. [LINK](#)

**Tennessee WIC benefits move to electronic card system** (AP) Tennessee’s Women, Infants and Children program has moved from issuing its benefits on paper to a debit card-style system. The state Department of Health says the program known as WIC will now allow beneficiaries to use the cards instead of paper vouchers to buy approved foods. The card can be used at any of the 790 WIC-authorized stores statewide. WIC offers supplemental food assistance to low-income pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women, infants, and children until age 5. [LINK](#)

**House Speaker Glen Casada’s top aide admits past cocaine use in legislative office building** (Tennessean) House Speaker Glen Casada’s top aide admitted Monday that he previously used cocaine in his legislative office before he became the speaker’s chief of staff. The revelation, first reported by NewsChannel 5, comes just days after Cade Cothren, Casada’s chief of staff, faced scrutiny over racist text messages. Cothren confirmed to the USA TODAY NETWORK – Tennessee on Monday that he used cocaine inside his legislative office building in recent years. He also confirmed that he used other drugs but not inside the legislative office building. He did not specify what drugs and when, but said he was no longer using any illegal substances. [LINK](#)

**House Speaker Glen Casada’s chief of staff resigns amid sexually explicit texts scandal** (Tennessean) House Speaker Glen Casada’s chief of staff Cade Cothren has resigned in light of reports that the top aide solicited sex in text messages to interns and lobbyists and used illegal drugs in the legislative office building. Cothren, 32, confirmed his resignation Monday evening. “I think it was just a distraction,” Cothren told the USA TODAY NETWORK-Tennessee in an interview. [LINK](#)

**Cade Cothren resigns as House Speaker’s chief of staff** (WTVF-TV) Cade Cothren, chief of staff to Tennessee House Speaker Glen Casada, has resigned following the disclosure of text messages showing racist comments, the use of illegal drugs and vulgar comments toward women. “Republicans in the House and Senate accomplished a plethora of great things this year. We have a hell of a leadership team in both chambers, and I couldn’t be more proud to work with them in 2019,” Cothren said Monday night in a text to NewsChannel 5 Investigates. [LINK](#)

**House speaker’s chief of staff resigns amid calls from Memphis legislators for investigation, resignation** (Daily Memphian) The House Speaker’s chief of staff resigned Monday amid calls for a Tennessee Bureau of Investigation probe into allegations of racially derogatory language, drug use and falsifying evidence. House Speaker Glen Casada confirmed that Cade Cothren, a former House Republican Caucus press

secretary who served as his chief administrator this year, submitted his resignation. Casada said he accepted Cothren's decision Monday to step down from the post. The move came the same day WTVF, a Nashville television station, reported Cothren admitted snorting cocaine in his legislative office within the past three years. [LINK](#)

**New text messages detail drug use, vulgar talk by Speaker's chief of staff (WTVF-TV)** New text messages uncovered by NewsChannel 5 Investigates show House Speaker Glen Casada's chief of staff bragging about his use of illegal drugs and engaging in vulgar conversations about women with his boss. Included is a text where Cade Cothren brags about snorting cocaine inside his legislative office. All of this comes days after NewsChannel 5 uncovered racist text messages from the chief of staff — text messages that Casada had suggested might have been fabricated. "My chief of staff is up here. He's up here working. He did nothing wrong," Casada told reporters Thursday after NewsChannel 5's report was published online. [LINK](#)

**Speaker Casada's chief of staff resigns amid controversy (WKRN-TV)** The chief of staff for Republican House Speaker Glen Casada, Cade Cothren, has verbally resigned after text messages came to light. The tipping point may have been "sexually explicit" text messages reported in The Tennessean late Monday that Cothren allegedly sent during a period of time in 2014-2016. Cothren has admitted to drug use during that time and seeking help. Speaker Casada referenced that in a statement Monday as to why he gave Cothren a "second chance" and "glad that he did." Cothren issued a statement to News 2. [LINK](#)

**Tennessee Speaker's Chief of Staff Cade Cothren resigns amid racism allegations (WZTV-TV)** The Tennessee House Speaker's Chief of Staff has resigned, FOX 17 News confirmed Monday night. The resignation follows accusations of racist messages sent by House Speaker Glen Casada's Chief of Staff Cade Cothren. In a statement, Speaker Casada said Cothren made the final call. "Effective immediately, my Chief of Staff, Cade Cothren has resigned from his position," Casada said Monday night. "As this story continued to evolve in recent days, I had additional conversations with Mr. Cothren, and he made this decision to resign. I thank Mr. Cothren for his service to our General Assembly and to the state of Tennessee." [LINK](#)

**Chief of staff to TN House Speaker resigns amid reports of lewd, racist text messages (WMC-TV)** The chief of staff to Tennessee House Speaker Glen Casada resigned Monday night amid reports he sent text messages to solicit interns and lobbyists for sex. Cade Cothren, 32, admits he sent some of the messages that have surfaced in recent days, but didn't specify which. The messages include sexually explicit language about women, and in some cases the message were sent directly to women, including an intern and lobbyist. [LINK](#)

**After admitting drug use, Tennessee House speaker's top aide resigns amid allegations of racist and sexually explicit texts (AP)** The Republican Tennessee House speaker's chief of staff resigned Monday amid allegations that he sent sexually explicit and racist text messages, and after admitting he used cocaine inside a legislative office building when he held a previous job. Cade Cothren stepped down late Monday, House Speaker Glen Casada said in a text message to The Associated Press. The resignation, which Casada said was effective immediately, comes at a time when at least four other Tennessee lawmakers have faced high-profile sexual misconduct allegations. [LINK](#)

**Glen Casada's Top Aide Resigns Amid Allegations Of Offensive Texts And Cocaine Use (WPLN Radio)** A top aide in the Tennessee House resigned Monday evening after a tumultuous series of revelations and accusations against him. Some of the accusations could also implicate his boss, House Speaker Glen Casada. In a statement to WPLN, Cothren applauded the Republican leadership in the statehouse. "At this point, the best thing for me to do is step down so House and Senate Republicans can continue focusing on those things that make Tennessee the best state in the entire nation," he said. [LINK](#)

**Rep. Glen Casada, Cade Cothren sent sexually explicit text messages about women (Tennessean)** House Speaker Glen Casada's top aide has a history of sending sexually explicit text messages and making inappropriate advances toward former interns, lobbyists and campaign staffers, according to documents obtained by the USA TODAY Network — Tennessee. Copies of text messages sent from a cellphone number associated with Cade Cothren, 32, show Casada was included on some of the staff member's derogatory comments toward women. [LINK](#)

**House Speaker Glen Casada's chief of staff resigns amid sexually explicit texts scandal** (TN Journal) House Speaker Glen Casada's chief of staff resigns amid sexually explicit texts scandal. Cothren the top strategist for Casada's campaign to nail down his election as speaker by getting involved in contested primaries for open Republican seats last year. Cothren also played a pivotal role in ensuring the razor-thin passage of Gov. Bill Lee's school voucher bill. "It was just a distraction," Cothren told The Tennessean. "We've accomplished a lot of great things this year and I don't want to take away from those for our caucus." [LINK](#)

**Speaker's chief of staff says he doesn't recall sending racist texts** (WTVF-TV) Tennessee House Speaker Glen Casada's chief of staff now says he cannot remember if he sent racist text messages to a former acquaintance. Last week, Casada had accused NewsChannel 5 of publishing fabricated text messages from 2015 and 2016 that Cade Cothren had sent to a former acquaintance. "Because this happened several years ago, I can sincerely say it is hard for me to remember things with absolute clarity," Cothren said in an email to NewsChannel 5 Investigates. [LINK](#)

**Casada backs aide with history of drug use in legislative office** (TN Journal) House Speaker Glen Casada's top aide used cocaine in the legislative suite he once shared with the future leader of the chamber, according a report by WTVF-TV's Phil Williams. Cade Cothren managed Casada's campaign from the vacant speakership position last year and was rewarded with the nearly \$200,000-per-year position of chief of staff once the Franklin Republican was formally elected in January. Cothren previously earned \$68,400 as a staffer. [LINK](#)

**Winning and losing legislation in Tennessee in 2019** (AP) Over the last four months, Tennessee lawmakers pushed through bills that would create a two-county expanded education voucher program, seek federal permission to overhaul TennCare through block grant funding and allow online sports betting in the state. The Republican-supermajority General Assembly wrapped up its annual legislative last week, clearing those contentious proposals and others. [LINK](#)

**Some say new voter registration law is voter suppression** (WREG-TV) "A step in the wrong direction." That's what opponents call the law that was signed Thursday by Tennessee Governor Bill Lee that fines groups for incomplete or inaccurate voter registration forms. Frank Johnson, candidate for City Council position 2, calls the law penalizing groups for incomplete voters registration forms nothing short of voter suppression. "That is absolutely ridiculous. You don't fine people for making simple errors on applications. Voting is the foundation of this country's democracy. We should not be making it harder for people to vote. We should be making it easier." [LINK](#)

**Tennessee secretary of state says new voter registration bill protects the voting process** (WMC-TV) Tennessee's secretary of state is weighing in on the new voter registration bill that just passed this legislative session. Tre Hargett says there is a need for standards in the state when registering people to vote. Now they have a benchmark in place to protect the integrity of the voting process. "What it does, if you are doing a paid-for registration drive, it says that you have to do that training, you have to turn in voter registration within 10 days of receiving them," said Hargett. "And it also places civil penalties in place if you turn in 100 deficient forms." [LINK](#)

**Corker on potential presidential bid: 'I just don't see it today'** (Times Free Press) Former U.S. Sen. Bob Corker said Monday "I don't really see" a path for himself to challenge President Donald Trump in Republicans' 2020 presidential primaries. "I think for someone to undertake that, they have to feel there's at least somewhat of an opportunity to actually be elected," the ex-senator and former Chattanooga mayor told reporters after a speech at the Nashville Rotary Club. "I see no point in just doing it to [run], you know, I just don't." [LINK](#)

**Have you been hit by the anti-UAW ad campaign?** (WDEF-TV) Late Friday, the National Labor Relations Board denied a UAW request to set a date for a union vote at the Volkswagen Chattanooga plant. But that hasn't stopped the pro and anti union campaigning here. The UAW on Monday issued a statement accusing the company and the NLRB of using delaying tactics. "Let Chattanooga workers vote. After insisting for the last four years that they would only agree to a vote of all production and maintenance workers, Volkswagen has now blocked just such a vote. VW's manipulation of the NLRB process to halt a vote of its workers is a travesty." [LINK](#)



**United Auto Workers renew call for Volkswagen Chattanooga plant union vote** (Times Free Press) The United Auto Workers said Monday it believes the National Labor Relations Board's Atlanta office will take action that could permit a union vote at the Volkswagen assembly plant in Chattanooga to take place. But the timing of a new election remains uncertain. "After reading the NLRB order, we are confident that the NLRB Region 10 will take action ... to allow the withdrawal of the maintenance petition and revoke, at the Chattanooga workers request, the certification of the maintenance petition," said Brian Rothenberg of UAW International. [LINK](#)

**Latest fire adds to growing list of incidents at Wacker's Charleston, Tennessee, chemical plant** (Times Free Press) A fire at the Wacker Polysilicon plant early Saturday morning required help from area emergency responders and added to the list of safety incidents at the chemical plant since it opened in Charleston, Tennessee in 2016. The fire was contained to a small, non-processing area of the facility. No chemicals were involved or released, according to Adam Lewis, the Bradley County Sheriff's Office director of media and public relations. It was reported at 1:20 a.m. on the fourth floor of the wastewater treatment building inside the facility. [LINK](#)

**Tennessee state parks recognized for 'Go Green' achievements** (AP) Tennessee's 56 state parks have been recognized for their efforts to practice environmental sustainability. The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation says Burgess Falls State Park in White County achieved platinum status, while nine parks reached gold level status, 24 parks reached silver level and 22 bronze. The nine gold level parks are Bicentennial Capitol Mall, Cumberland Trail, Cummins Falls, Dunbar Cave, Johnsonville, Montgomery Bell, Radnor Lake, Roan Mountain and Standing Stone. [LINK](#)

**This State Has a Bundle of Ideas to Lower Drug Prices** (Stateline) For Big Pharma, a lion's den might seem more hospitable than the Maine legislature this year. The animus begins at the top, in the office of Senate President Troy Jackson, a fifth-generation logger from Aroostook County on the Canadian border. Jackson isn't shy about much, and that includes his feelings about drug companies and the prices they charge his Maine constituents. Jackson's language is lively, but many in both political parties, at both the state and the federal level, share his sentiments. From President Donald Trump on down, there is increasing frustration that Americans pay more for prescription drugs than people do in other countries, where prescription drugs often are subject to government price controls. [LINK](#)

## **OPINION**

**Victor Ashe: TVA's new CEO, Jeff Lyash, needs to back up positive words with action** (News Sentinel) Jeff Lyash, new TVA CEO, issued a polite statement responding to the stunning front page editorial urging Lyash to "Fix the Mess" at TVA. His words are positive but non-specific about the damage left by former CEO Bill Johnson. It will require real actions to repair the damage. Some items like releasing the salaries of TVA employees upon request are easy to do. Something precise needs to start soon. Naming a person to handle the fallout from the Roane County ash spill issues should be helpful if the person named is given authority to act. Last week, federal Judge Tom Varlan denied Jacobs Engineering the right to an immediate appeal and ordered mediation to begin. [LINK](#)

**Guest column: Check your black privilege? That's a discussion worth having** (Tennessean) A meaningful existence for many African Americans entails acquiring a significant amount of privilege within the white world. The modus operandi for the modern day civil rights movement, to be sure, was to secure equity and equality within such a space. This is not to suggest that African Americans relinquished reverence toward their African heritage; for many, the desire to thrive in both black and white spaces was predicated upon an essential ethical and theological thought which suggested that America owed a debt to African Americans, and that God desired that African Americans survive and obtain more space within a constructed and privileged white world. [LINK](#)